OCTOBER — 1946 — DECEMBER

"Where there is no vision the people perish"

THE POETRY REVIEW

THE JOURNAL OF THE POETRY SOCIETY (INCORPORATED)
AND A MAGAZINE OF GENERAL
POETIC INTEREST

▼

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A NEW SONNET COMPETITION

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POETS AND PLAYWRIGHTS

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The Poetry Review

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Modern Poetry—Whither ?

A QUARTER of a century ago and more, when Amy Lowell issued her *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry* and various "advanced" versifiers had begun to appear, readers of traditional tastes were startled at extremist trends, represented by work such as Ezra Pound's

> Like a skein of loose silk blown against a wall
> She walks by the railing of a path in Kensington Gardens,
> And she is dying piece-meal
> of a sort of emotional anemia,

and Alfred Kreymborg's

> The old squaw
> Is one
> With the stone behind her.
> Both have squatted there—
> Ask mesa
> Or mountain how long.

But those who disliked this style of verse were not alarmed. "It will pass", they consoled themselves. "It has to pass. In a few years at most the present phase—the present craze—will be forgotten."

In one respect only the commentators have proved to be correct. Who to-day does recall the experimental work published in 1918 or 1920? Who can so much as recollect the names of many of the writers? Who would think of turning to the pages of Walter Conrad Arensberg or look for consolation to Alter Brody? Who would seek Kreymborg's *Mushrooms?* The actual output certainly has not stood the test of a quarter of a century; nor have the names of most of the writers. Nevertheless, the same type of experimentalism continues (if it can be called experimentalism, considering that it is of the nature of an experiment not to be protracted indefinitely). And to-day our attitude, if we do not happen to like the newer kind of work, has somewhat altered. "Well, hasn't it always been like this?" we ask. "Wasn't it just the same twenty years ago? Weren't writers then turning out just the same disorganized product? But won't the true values survive unchanged?"

Unfortunately the assumptions implied in these questions are all false. Literature was not in precisely the same state twenty years ago; nor were writers then turning out just the same disorganized product; nor will the "true values" survive unchanged just because we wish it. Unless we

glance back analytically, and read what was being acclaimed and anthologized nearly a generation ago, we will have little idea of an insidious transformation that has penetrated the entire structure of American poetry. This transformation has moved from revolt toward anarchy, from stray and sporadic outbursts of inanity to widespread and in some cases predominant chaos. Thus, twenty-five years ago a certain number of writers were publishing "poetry" that could not be identified as such by the older standards; but they were after all a mere scattering amid a much larger number of accredited traditional poets. Besides, their offerings, wild and irrational as they may have appeared, were usually at least intelligible. During the interval, however, the extremists have taken possession of the field numerically, and at the same time have tended to become increasingly disjointed, increasingly fantastic, and increasingly at variance with all former standards and objectives.

The proof of these claims is written in cold print, too indelibly for denial. Consider, for example, the anthology, *Verse of Our Day*, compiled by Margery Gordon and Marie B. King (New York, 1923). Here one finds America represented by Lizette Woodworth Reese, Charles Hanson Towne, Sara Teasdale, Cale Young Rice, Fannie Stearns Davis, and others equally conservative, with virtually no one at all except Carl Sandburg seated on the left. Or turn to *Our Poets of To-day*, a critical survey of American poets, by Howard Willard Cook (New York, 1923). Here some space is given to Amy Lowell, Sandburg, and one or two other radicals, but the lion's share of attention—more than ninety per cent., at a moderate estimate—goes to traditionalists such as Edwin Markham, George Sterling, Alan Seeger, John Hall Wheelock, and John G. Neihardt.

But perhaps still more significant is Harriet Monroe's and Alice Corbin Henderson's *The New Poetry*, in some respects the standard modernist anthology. The original edition was issued in 1917; but the "new and revised edition" (once more, New York, 1923) is equally revealing for what it includes and omits. Here one finds, as one would expect, a higher percentage of innovators: T. S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, Amy Lowell, Lola Ridge, etc. But do they predominate? Far from it! They are outnumbered three or four to one by conservatives which (to mention Americans only) include Arthur Davison Ficke, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Hermann Hagedorn, Witter Bynner, George Sterling, Margaret Widdemer, and many more. In other words, despite all inroads made prior to 1923 by apostles of the "new poetry", two of their high priestesses could compile an anthology given mainly to the old poetry.

But during the next decade or two all this was to change. As early as 1927 the drift was evident when Modern Library published their *Modern American Poets*, edited by Conrad Aiken. Out of fourteen contributors, aside from the compiler, eight—including Eliot, "H. D.", William Carlos Williams, etc.—write in the "modern idiom". However, this representation, of just over fifty per cent., was a mere halfway mark, exceeded in

many later compilations. Take, for example, Selden Rodman's *A New Anthology of Modern Poetry* (New York, 1938). Here, out of sixty-seven authors apart from the compiler, no less than forty may be classified as of the "new school". But even this is conservative compared with the record of Oscar Williams' *New Poems, 1943*, in which only four or five out of thirty-nine contributors offer anything to be classified as poetry by any test in use among our fathers.

In other words, the traditionalists are increasingly being brushed off the map. Moreover, the same tendency illustrated by the anthologies is evident in the output of book publishers and in the pages of sophisticated magazines, which more and more have devoted their print and paper to work of the "emancipated" type, with the result that poets who prefer to stay unemancipated must in large part remain unpublished.

But this is only the quantitative side of the story: equally important is the qualitative aspect. For not only is the new group occupying a constantly greater share of the white space; it is also turning out more and more of what may be termed the madhouse variety of work: work in which clarity is avoided, meaning ignored, rhythm discarded, and freakish combinations of words and a freakish appearance courted. This is evident, to begin with, in the pages of certain darlings of the new school. Take, for example, Marianne Moore. It is my own view that she never at any time has merited consideration as a poet, despite her outstanding literary prizes. Yet she does illustrate the growing disintegration undergone by many modern versifiers. In Monroe's and Henderson's *The New Poetry* she did not appear more eccentric than many other contributors. We may not, for example, regard the following as poetry, but we should not think of calling it insane:

> Man, looking into the sea—
> taking the view from those who have as much right to it
> as you have yourself—
> it is human nature to stand in the middle of a thing
> but you cannot stand in the middle of this.

Yet in her later work represented by *What Are Years* (New York, 1941), there is nothing more coherent than "See in the Midst of Fair Leaves":

> and much fruit, the swan—
> one line of the mathematician's
> sign-greater-than-drawn
> to an apex where the lake is
> met by the weight on it; or an angel
> standing in the sun; how well
> armed, how manly . . .

In the first selection, it may be said, the author shows the promise of disintegration; in the second, she has fulfilled that promise.

Much the same may be stated of one better known: T. S. Eliot. More than twenty years ago he could write, in "Portrait of a Lady":

> Now that lilacs are in bloom

She has a bowl of lilacs in her room
And twists one in her fingers while she talks.
"Ah, my friend, you do not know, you do not know
What life is, you who holds it in your hands";
(Slowly twisting the lilac stalks)
"You let if flow from you, you let it flow,
And youth is cruel, and has no remorse . . . "

Whatever one may think of the poetic quality of these lines, they are at least consecutive and understandable. Consider by contrast this typical passage from *Four Quartets* (New York, 1943):

At the still point of the turning world. Neither
flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there
the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it
fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement
from nor towards
Neither descent nor decline. Except for the point,
the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.

True, not all Eliot's early work is as lucid as the first selection, and not all his recent offerings are so involved in obscure and unlyrical philosophy as the second. But a comparison will at least indicate in what direction Eliot along with scores of other versifiers has been moving.

The significant currents, however, are not to be found in the work of individual writers; they may be seen in the direction taken by our entire body of poetic production. When the modern movement was young, extreme radicalism was represented by Carl Sandburg's

The woman named Tomorrow
Sits with a hairpin in her teeth
And takes her time,
And does her hair the way she wants it,

and by Wallace Stevens'

Complacencies of the peignoir, and late
Coffee and oranges in a sunny chair,
And the green freedom of a cocatoo
Upon a rug,

and by so-called "imagists" such as "H. D.", with lines like

I saw the first pear
As it fell.
The honey-seeking, golden-banded,
The yellow swarm,
Was not more fleet than I.

Whether or not such passages be poetry, they do have poetic suggestions. But a change was evident by the early thirties, when Hart Crane

was acclaimed for "The Bridge"—a work marked, indeed, by bright flashes of poetry, but containing also its waste lands, such as

> Minstrels when you steal a chicken just
> save me a wing for if it isn't
> Eire it ain't for miles around a
> Mazda: and the telegraphic night coming on Thomas
> a Ediford—and whistling down the tracks
> a headlight rushing with the sound—can you
> imagine: while an EXpress makes time like
> SCIENCE—COMMERCE and the HOLYGHOST
> RADIO ROARS IN EVERY HOME WE HAVE THE
> NORTHPOLE
> WALLSTREET AND VIRGINBIRTH WITHOUT
> STONES OR
> WIRES OR EVEN RUNning brooks connecting ears . . .

In such work obviously, something is going to pieces. The impression one gets is not only of bad poetry; it is of a crumbling mind. And in this, unhappily, one might have read the "curve of the future". For to-day, on the extreme left, what do we find? Not the relatively mild departures such as those of Sandburg, Stevens and "H. D.", but work in the Crane tradition, in which everything—rhyme, rhythm, and reason—has been shot to tatters. Thus we have a piece such as Kenneth Fearing's "Dirge" (quoted in Rodman's *A New Anthology of Modern Poetry*), which works up to a climax in

> Wham, Mr. Roosevelt; pow, Sears, Roebuck; awk, big
> dipper; bop, summer rain;
> bong, Mr., bong, Mr., bong, Mr., bong.

Thus, also, we have offerings such as Muriel Rukeyser's "Drunken Girl":

> Do you know the name of the average animal?
> Not the dog
> nor the green-headed frog
> nor the white ocean monster lying flat:
> lower than that,
> the curling one who comes out in the storm:
> the middle one's the worm.
> Lift up your face, my love, lift up your mouth,
> kiss me and come to bed . . .

Again, we find an irreverence not only for poetry but for everything that the decent feelings of mankind once surrounded with respect, as in W. H. Auden's

> Kicking his mother till she let go of his soul
> Has given him a healthy appetite.

And we observe writers—and applauded writers!—descending to the extremes of

> life hurl my

yes, crumbles hand (ful released conarafetti) ev
eryglitter, inga. where
mil (lions of a flick) litter ing brightmillion
ofS hurl; edingogg: ing
whom areEYES shy-dodge is bright cruMbhandful
quick-hurl edinwho . . .

These lines are from E. E. Cummings' *Collected Poems* (Harcourt, Brace, New York; third printing, 1946); and are little if any more incoherent than any of the other 314 pieces.

Other examples might be offered, *ad nauseam;* but these should suffice to prove the case. The fact is that the modernist movement is not a static thing, as has been assumed; the fact is that the stream has been constantly flowing, and that both quantitatively, by the increasing infiltration of chaotic work, and qualitatively by the growing dissociation of ideas, rhythm and expression, the non-poets have been occupying the field in the name of poetry, and have been driving the genuine poets to the backwoods.

STANTON A. COBLENTZ.

Ballerina

HER feet like snowflakes kiss the ground,
Or moonbeams on a summer night;
Her woven steps are no more bound
To earth than is a swallow's flight.

Like a white flame she swerves and bends
And swirls on scintillating toes,
Alive to all the veering winds'
Crescendos and arpeggios.

Her arms are like the waves that fall
And fall and rise on a rhythmic sea;
Her hands are like the stars that call
Signals across Infinity.

Her body is a ray of light
From some ethereal sphere unknown,
That shimmers through the shades of night
In silver rhapsody alone.

Her every gesture is a flair
Of inspiration and of grace;
She is an entity of air,
A point in interstellar space.

In her movements, in her rest,
She is Music's radiant bride,
Melody made manifest,
Harmony personified.

T. Bouch.

Furniture

WE look at you and never see
Your voiceless, aching agony;
And we forget, how in the wood
Green and transfigured you stood,
Breathing and free, as day is long,
With young buds bursting into song,
A-tremble at the wind's caress
In ecstasies of happiness.

Even your sisters, burning now
Twig upon twig and bough on bough,
Have low fierce songs and fire that plays
Upon them in a naked blaze;
And blue the smoke of their curled breath
Goes to the sky; they have no death,
No death of servitude like you,
Silent and still the slow years through.

We cut you from the living trees,
And gave you shape, and bade you please
Our will. With saw and lathe and tool
We fashioned table, chair and stool
To meet our need. Dumb, patient things,
Forgive us all our trespassings! . . . .
We careless craftsmen, we who stole
Your voice and life—forgot your soul.

Elizabeth Keen.

Winter Attack

SOLDIER, the land is cold and still,
With iron heart and frozen breath;
A weeping moon over the hill,
And Flemish fields as dark as death.

Sigh, lad, a little; stir and dream.
Tilt back your helmet from your brow.
The days you loved, of gold and gleam,
Are lost to you, and England, now.

And dreams must do (till they announce
The bird of peace has taken wing)
For all you love, and all renounce:
The rose, the kiss, the jewelled ring.

Daybreak is near; your way ahead
Where poppies bloomed once in the corn.
Put back the helmet on your head.
There's Life, lad, in a crown of thorn.

Evelyn Watts.

To Pam

WHERE falls the sun in flames into the wave,
Where the hill's opposing crag defies the sky,
Where the power parts, and the world forgives the brave,
We'll go together, dearest, you and I.
Where the sands dissolve, and dust becomes a haze
And the trees are lost, and earth becomes a sphere,
Where the heavens stretch, and the stars defy your gaze,
These gifts I'll bring you there from far and near:
Moss-covered drives, the sharp, sweet scent of hay,
Slow flowing moats with pinnacles and towers,
Waking at dawn, kisses at break of day,
Worshipping words and long ecstatic hours.
A moonbeam bridge I'll bring and moonbeams too,
And drag the sun back from the sea for you.

Wheathamstead. *Geoffrey T. King.*

First Snowdrop

SNOW-WAXEN point of life, untimely come
While still unready earth is iron-dead,
When finger-tips on tree and hedge are numb,
And crystalled is the holly overhead,
Your cloak of powdered green is thin and small
To shield you from these tentacles of snow,
There is no comfort in the driven squall,
No tenderness about you as you grow;
Warm in the blankets of the earth you lay,
But you have dared to thrust aside the night
And tilt your chalk-soft spear against the day,
While still his armour glitters, Winter-white;
Yet, foolish snowdrop, for the hope you bring
These eyes have never seen a lovelier thing. *B. R. Gibbs.*

Counter-Hand

THIS is no setting for romance—the crowd
Queueing for service, the tobacco-haze,
The reek of steaming cabbages, the loud
Clatter of crockery on metal trays.
She is no heroine who wheels that trolley
Of dirty plates piled to precarious heights,
Who daydreams in abstracted melancholy
And lifts a hand to put her hair to rights.
No heroine—yet that gesture to my fancy
Evokes the type, the classic parallel,
Suggesting by some subtle necromancy
A seaborne goddess riding on a shell:
Divorced from time and place and menial dress
She's Paphian Aphrodite and no less. *Eric Fryer.*

To a Seagull

MOST mute, most simple, most melancholy bird,
old-ancestered, far-flown and alien—
monotonous as the sea's salty syllables
above the waves that lick the sandy shore,
at time's bleak intervals comes now and then
your screechy repertoire.

No grace is yours, cold-blooded bird—
crude-countenanced, dull eyes that blink and stare;
in your brown bony beak no beauty is,
your soul is solemn and unstirred,
there is no mirth nor any music there.

Far-follower, flat-footed scavenger,
O slow and solemn searcher of the strand,
how like myself, club-footed wanderer
are you and all your harelipped melancholy band.

Ah, strange is life! and strange our fortune is!
How like myself, sad traveller you must pass,
leaving behind for Fame's great caravan
no treasured notes. We leave at last
our salty signatures upon the sand.

Los Angeles. *Donald J. Paquette.*

Song for Isabella

GHOSTS surround my waking hours,
Phantoms pale inspire and move me,
Mists of long forgotten powers
Cherish me, embrace and love me.
Mist and mist and shadow give
Ghostly breath whereby I live.

Flowers and moonbeams please me still,
Dreams that sleep's long silence brings me,
Quiet tasks long days to fill,
Songs some bird in pity sings me.
The past my wine, my daily bread
Fond memories, and I am fed.

Ghost unto ghost whispers of death,
Dead musty things, dead eyes, dead hair;
Tomb unto far tomb hearkeneth,
Shadow to shadow through the air.
Nor flesh, nor blood, nor life, nor lust,
Thy love, they sigh, thy love is dust. *M. M. B.*

In Memory of a Fisherman

HE has folded his nets, and the Pele of wild Fouldrey
Shall find him no longer on billow afloat.
His pannier lies idle: his rod and his fly-book
Shall rest with tradition. The alpaca coat
Is left to the moth. But the Crake and the Leven
Go singing to seaward in sunshine and rain.
And if the clouds weep, 'tis the tear of fond Nature
That drops in kind pity where life parts in pain.

Yet yield not to sorrow. The lake and the river
Shall flow for your solace, in beauty and calm;
And where was his haunt shall be splendour for ever,
And woodland and weir shall his presence embalm.
Eternal the radiance of rainbow and torrent,
Eternal the crystals of spray and the sea;
And where Thurston Water and deep-blue Winander
Lie circling in sunlight, his spirit shall be.

T. E. Casson.

May Day on Brighton Beach

UNCHANGING sea, sing me your ancient song,
Not harsh nor tender, neither grave nor gay,
Where on this beach your waves roll green and long,
Their sudden foam as quick to drain away.
Yours is the song of space, borne on the wind,
And old with Time's serene monotony,
Filling the hungry caverns of my mind
With dream-like echoes of Eternity.
Too long I listened to another song,
The bitter hymn that vain ambition taught,
Where Time is like a whip whose urgent thong
Whistles the shrill refrain that life is short;
But now the songs that cities sing to me
Drown in the soft susurrus of the sea.

Brighton, 1.5.46. *H. W. Harding.*

Trincomalee After Dark

THE flickering light of a toddy tavern;
Incense in the air;
Tom-toms; whispering voices; distant jungle noises;
Shadows everywhere.
Bare feet that make no sound at all;
The rustling of a tree;
A baby's cry, from a hovel close by;
The murmur of the sea.

Catford. *Barbara M. Smoker.*

Bombed Site

SEE, here the apple-tree
Blossoms in ashes
Spring from her reverie
Quickens her lashes,
Wakens to find the lost soul of the world
New at her feet, in its infancy curled.

Yet on the rubble-heap
Charity lingers,
Merciful grasses keep
Pushing green fingers
Up to the light, to the radiance above,
Drenched in Adversity, parted from Love.

See, here the willow mourns,
Indolent tresses
Caught in the summer dawns
Like past caresses,
Wafted on memories, bitterly rare,
Tainted with sorrow the shadows may share.

True, in this cloven shell
Gay footsteps pattered—
Laughter rang like a bell—
Now Mirth is shattered.
Cold scar of stone remains, tortured with fire,
Grim sacrifice to a War-God's desire.

They who are buried here,
Under the living
Flowers, shall they appear
Fair and forgiving?
Taken from Earth too soon, will they recall
Whose hand has massacred, ravaged their all?

See, here the apple-tree
Blossoms in nettles
Decks their virginity
Pink with her petals.
God in each April renews with His Breath
This last memorial, unhindered by Death.

Kingston-upon-Thames. *Olwyn Pogmore.*

And If For Me

AND if for me there shall be no returning
To this bright earth that I have loved so fiercely,
Then must I hoard each last remaining sunrise
For long to-morrows.
Or, should the newer sun outshine the old one,

Now, wide-eyed, must I walk beneath earth's starlight:
No thing of God's shall have the power to alter
Or end that feasting.
Of foam and gull, of rocky peak I garner;
Of three-day flower, of cardinal with her nestlings;
Of thunder-shock and quick downpour reviving
A famished prairie.
Thus shall I go, safe-pursed, when I am summoned,
With gold that buys yet never is diminished:
As long as spirits live it shall be buying
The days that are not.

Kunigunde Duncan.

The Monument of Maria de Caretto

HER spirit hangs upon a half-drawn breath;
If some frail leaf should drift upon her gown
Her eyes would open: hers is sleep, not death.
She hears the singing voices in the town
And feels noon's sunlight on her folded hands
Like drifts of golden petals. Here apart
She lies. The dim dusk understands
The secret closely folded in her heart.
She knows the shadows of the regal west
Hold over her a pall of richest dyes,
Yet quiet she sleeps, in state, most amply blest
With kinglier vision hid beneath her eyes.
Were they the outmost harmonies of space
That gave this breathing wonder to her face?

J. Evelyn B. Winbolt.

Ceres' Song

O COLD my heart as the winter moon
Sad as a nightingale's my song;
Slow as a rose the hours unfold,
And grief's grey shadow gropes the wall.

The bright flowers fade; the rivers cease;
Dark is the earth; the green leaves dead;
And hands grow cold, forget their skill,
And words are stumbling, useless things.

Weep now, weep long, O brittle stars,
So the great world may rend with grief
And from the hollow of the rocks
Proserpine step forth with her flowers.

Gerrards Cross. *C. Busby Smith.*

Undeserved Epitaph

YOUR body died, beloved, and I said
I had no time for tears and scorned to weep;
I built a wall around my heart to keep
You warm and living whom they mourned as dead.
Memory's floor is all uncarpeted
So tread not heavily but softly creep,
That only I may waken from my sleep
And make my arm a pillow for your head.
And so I smile, beloved, being wise,
Knowing you lie beneath no seventh wave,
Nor, clutching gilded harp, bestride the skies;
Yet to safeguard our secret I behave
Tenderly to their murmured mockeries,
And lay cold wreaths of poppies on your grave.

Mary More.

In a Westmorland Valley

BEAUTY is in the living grass
And in the stone inanimate;
Lovely the flowers that propagate
Their perfume to the winding pass.
Beauty no less in sound than sight
Where the lithe barking dog pursues
The dilatory bleating ewes
In ragged convoy on the height.
Now even with a frugal hand
Dispenses her remaining light,
Yet cannot by such care withstand
The striding shadows of the night
That brings alike to man and sheep
The renovating gift of sleep.

Maidstone.

Eric Fryer.

Elegy

FAIR she is who now is dead,
Sleeping here and quieted,
Fair and wise—and all is said!

Now at rest in Nature's womb,
Silent darkness of the tomb,
Still she lies—with little room.

She for whom the world was wide,
Restless still—a colt untried—
Worked and played and laughed and cried.

I who stand alone, forlorn,
Savouring her pretty scorn,
Helpless am. I can but mourn.

I can see her still; but she
Never will come back to me.
Not through all eternity.

Dusk is falling. It grows late.
Yonder is the churchyard gate.
I must go and she must wait. *J. Sackville Martin.*

Limitation

COULD I but live as smoothly as a flower,
The unpretentious daisy in the field;
Could I commute one complex human hour
For time unmeasured with its richer yield;
I should grow wise from gazing at the sky,
A natural being, poised, and filled with grace,
Perceiving truth with my small petalled eye,
Knowing fulfilment in one quiet place.
Then to return with memory unimpaired,
To live my life with that unconscious art
Learned from reflective flowers; had I but shared
Their secret vision, and their secret heart.
We sense too faintly with the human ear,
Eternity, which every flower can hear. *Juanita Peirse.*

Autumn Glade

PEACE and a tranquil loveliness abide
Here in this glade where feet intruders are
Where every shaft of sunlight seems to hide
Behind the aged trees, afraid to mar
The mystic dimness here confined.
Unseen the acolytes of autumn swing
Their censers filled with scent of dying leaves
While birds with mellow voice their anthems sing
In praise of that Divinity which weaves
For them this haven from mankind.

And if you, too, in search of autumn's gold,
Find such a place as this, be wise, O friend,
Keep well its secret and the way withhold
From the unwise, who cannot comprehend
Such peace with gossamer enshrined.

Ruislip. *H. Broadberry Seaman.*

High Flight

THERE'S rainfall on the meadows
The wind is east and cold;
Then come with us a'climbing
To landscape blue and gold.

Sunset time: and wheeling
We'll watch this daytime die
In glories unsuspected
Across the western sky.

There, when God makes rainbows
He makes them quite complete:
Down from high flecked cirrus
In loops about your feet.

Cumulus for mountains
At ten times mountain height
And red shored little islands
Afloat the fading light.

Come with us a'sailing
Until the world is lost
And pale Polaris glimmers
Down through the perspex frost.

Come east 'til cloud sheets falter
And ribbon rivers peep.
And see the moon-light settle
On towns new turned to sleep.

Then one wide sweep, descending
Towards the west again—
To England lying under
Another day of rain.

F/O., R.A.F. *John Kennedy.*

Consolation

IN earlier seasons, as I watched men wage
Their waspish battles, and was slashed or torn
By knife-stabs of a friend, or worldlings' scorn,
I bit my lip, or stamped my heels in rage.
But now I stare aloof, as on a stage
Where futile Hamlets pace, and Lears mourn,
And all the nettle-pricks of self are gone,
And I read deeper than the opened page;
And feel amusement at man's thrust and patter,
And sadness when his cobweb wiles grow dense,
Mixed with a calm beyond reproach or wrath.
For nothing, when the tale is told, can matter
Except one's own true spirit, and the sense
Of walking loyally a silent path. *Stanton A. Coblentz.*

When I Am Dead

WHEN I am dead I shall not come,
A jealous and possessive ghost,
To drift about the living whom,
When I too breathed, I loved the most.

Why should I watch their sorrow die,
Their memory sicken and grow less,
And see upon each inward eye
My portrait fade to nothingness?

No resolution can give pause
To time, no influence repeal
Those incommunicable laws
Which teach the human heart to feel.

Let them forget me then; and I
Shall be content, since I can prove
One moment in eternity
Was mine—and why ask more of love?

Brian Hill.

The Cloud of Witnesses

ONCE I was lonely as the little wind
that singing among tiny mountain flowers
slips softly through the grass, as though to find
some friendliness, but passes on alone.
Lone was I too, but strove not then to seek
the restless company of fellow men,
rather to rest upon the heart so meek,
so true, so changeless ever beating through
all nature—there found no lack of company
but walked among a cloud of witnesses.

I. V. Orford.

Softly I Tread

SOFTLY I tread the evening of my pain,
With cautious feet, uncertain of their way,
And clouded eyes, which yet can see again
Beyond the mist and wreck of yesterday.
Drab Reason stalks, and I must smile at last
But simple pleasures, and the power to sleep,
And little cares, and hiding from the past,
Now make me weary as they made me weep;
Tears were my faith; what is there now to do?
Not Hope nor yet Despair is in my mind,
But some faint breath compounded of the two,
Which gives me life when death would be more kind.
Softly I tread for with each step are born
The shapeless shadows of another dawn.

Edna Chard.

Trees

ABOVE the green of grasses,
Over the brown of hedges,
Tall trees trace their branches
On mountainous cloud ledges.

They spread and shine
Clear and fine
In light of Sun and Moon,
Bare branches that will flow
With blossom of snow
And foliage of green,
Or plume a night
With silver light
Of moon-entranced sheen.

The line of trees,
The line of life,
The branching veins of Earth
Carrying her very blood and breath
Up through the living air;
The clean bones
That will bear
Their body of death.

Tall brown trees
Shadowing up from Earth
That pluck a deep viol base
In the yearly song of mirth
When green above
Answers green below
And song answers song
In the fugue of Spring.

Ivery Bartholomew.

Art

CAUGHT in the radiance of a sunset haze,
The Painter bids the gold-dust of the air
Answer the adoration of his gaze
In vibrant tones upon a canvas square.
Music, transmuting colour into sound,
Captures the golden passion in a note,
Till in its power a myriad tongues have found
The rapture of an universal throat.
The Poet shares the vision, shares the song,
And makes them one in the eternal Word,
Till unity denies disruption's wrong,
And timeless Truth is seen and heard—
For Art illumines the immortal scroll
Whose words translate the mystery of the whole.

Roberta Shuttleworth.

When Men Go Armed

WHEN men go armed in body and in mind
To wreck the world with thunder and to bring,
Wild as the sea and ruthless as the wind,
Chaos, destruction, hate and suffering;
When might is throned and worshipped as a god
Whose granite will commands the obedient breath
Of those who serve him, and whose lightest nod
Must go unquestioned though its end be death;
Faith is not broken, but with patient trust
Builds her slow dream deep in the quiet earth,

Pitting against the desert's angry dust
The green assurance of a second birth.
Why then surrender to the rule of night
When earth is always turning to the light? *W. R. Latham.*

A Weaver's Song

THERE are no trees around our house to hold
The wind in cradling boughs, and no birds sing
A green song in our street, the smoky wing
Of dusk is burnished with the haloed ring
Of every gas lamp's interval of gold.

The morning air that creeps across our sill
Has lost the honey smell of meadow grass,
And films the roof tops with a dusty breath.
And people here on gritty pavements pass
The time of day, and stare through thick plate glass

At sausages, and hats, at shoes, and cakes,
Take food and music canned, breathe café haze,
Accept ideals unfolded by the fakes
Of celluloid—these concrete ways
Lead nowhere through the tunnelled empty days.

And each night when I leave the weaving shed
Longing for peace, I must make tea, and clean
The house, and get the children up to bed—
Then from my rocking chair I reach the green,
Thick flowered fields that stretch unwalked between

This dark back street and heaven. With shut eyes
I climb towards the light where mountain steeps
Dazzle the sight with snow, and towers rise
Dwarfing the gas works, and impoverished heaps
Of slag, and where the moon at night time keeps
A pearl-white watch among the lacquered deeps.

Oh, what a place is this where I can find
Courage to overwhelm the tired day,
Solace to ease the ache in the unkind,
Sharp-sided words that city people say—
No one can rob me here, no one can bind
The life whose freedom ranges in the mind!

Phoebe Hesketh.

Coal

I MET a man with grime bedew'd
And sprinkled over with black dust.
A prince of darkness he was hued;
And yet his path was with the just.
He was the coal-man of the town,
Prometheus from the clouds come down.

He wore a cuirass on his back,
Spiked with the iron stud,
To mitigate the cobbly sack,
And ease it where he could.
He walk'd in beauty like the night,
Wherein his teeth, as a moon, gave light.

O coal-man, pacing up and down
The frosted street in days of war,
Thou art a sun-god to the town,
And housewives bless thee more and more.
Thou bakest bread and cheerest eld;
Thy name is with the angels spell'd.

T. E. Casson.

Credo

BELIEVE me, love, it was not always so:
Not always, ah, not always have I lacked
The haven of your arms, for long ago
In those forgotten days ere Troy was sacked,
Or Babylon a myth, we kissed and clung
And knew each other's secret thoughts and ways.
I know not by what stream or in what tongue
I heard at first your voice and met your gaze:
But this is sure as death—in some dead land
Our souls have met: or else how should I know
So perfectly the touch of lip and hand?
Believe me, love, it was not always so.

Harrow.

Daphne Blampied.

No Return

SNORTING admonitory fires,
His brutal body lightning charged,
He tossed your future in his gold-brown mane,
Stamped in his stall—
And galloped through the jungle music of your heart.

While Destiny stood by,
And scoffed to see the world in ruins at your feet,
The loosed impatience of the hooves of Time
Beat out that one relentless sentence in your brain,
"No return, no return, for you there is no return."

Under a cold Valkyrie moon,
He pawed your songs and stars to dust—
He was the black embodiment of Time,
The stallion of disdain.

Burdon Hotel, Weymouth. *A. R. Curzon-Howe.*

A LITTLE LIGHT SONG; TO BE SUNG TO A SLIGHT ACCOMPANIMENT ON STRINGS.

"I believe in the resurrection of the body"

HOW many Springs,
And how many Summers,
Shall pass over me
Ere Death's dark mummers

Shall place my body
Neath Earth's soft cover?
Fill in the pit
And tidy it over.

And leave me to rest,
Till, one with the earth,
I struggle and strive,
To a second birth?

When her womb shall move,
And her sap shall stir,
And her breast once more
Be my nourisher?

Then shall I rise
In Spring's sweet flutings,
In Summer's leafage,
In Autumn's fruitings,

Or as Winter mist
Shall be reborn
As glory of sunset
As pearl-shrouded morn.

Or as frozen snow
Come soft down-flying
To cover the place
Where I was lying,

To sink once more
In quiet subjection,
To rise again
To sweet resurrection.

O sweet resurrection!
Thus shall I rise
To eternal life
In Earth's paradise.

Courtlands, Roydon. *I. M. Mills.*

The Splendid Few

WE felt the fierce white-heat of courage forge the Few
Into a Force impregnable as steel, more true
When tried, than any tempered blade Toledo knew.

And we, who saw the splendid Few contest the sky,
Watching their vapours trail the blue, forgot to cry,
Hearing their guns, were not afraid to die.

We shall not fail, who knew that purifying flame,
Nor turn from sacrifice, who loved them and became
Heirs of their victory and guardians of their name.

M. Sheppard Fidler.

Lost Love

AND in your place for company I keep
The wish-filled dreams of our past eager ways,
And often grief and joy enmingled creep
Upon me unaware these older days.
Unchanging and unchangeable there sits
Our little spell of undisturbed delight,
Twin efforts of our feeble earthy wits
To reach beyond our futile human might.
O you were sweet and lovely then, and I
A pioneer o'er puffed with stalwart pride,
And lively jests of plucking from the sky
A diadem of stars for my young bride!
Do you, I sometimes wonder, think and pause
To recollect our lost love's bitter cause?

F. T. Bratton.

To Robert Nichols

OUT of the night you sang of the great sun;
Alone, saw hope shine in that deathless light;
Wept for the dead, and sang of battles won;
Flung words like flames against the face of night.
The world sought sorrow, and you sought delight;
To gain her faced the gale, a rain of fire,
And found joy was a flame . . . Beauty so bright
Consumes and kills with desperate desire.

You sang; few listened; proudly went your way
Apart and undismayed; went, daring all,
To climb the shining places where truth lay . . .
Those heights which to the greatest spirits call.
Burned by the heavenly flame you sought, you died
Somewhere upon a high lone mountain-side.

W.R.N.S., Falmouth.

Diana Momber.

Sonnet for My Love

DREAM of my love I may, and that is all.
I must not take his heart, nor yet his hand
To lead me through the dark; but if I fall,
Unaided, I will rise at his command.
Softly I hear the wood-lark woo his mate
Down in the quiet glade where light and love
Mingle to crown with peace their blissful fate
In the green radiance of their sunlit grove.
For them no harsh farewells, no suffering
Though I must tread the earth alone, and be
Responsive to the lovely things that spring
From life and posey, and so be free.
Still in my heart his unborn child will lie
Untarnished, bright and golden till I die.

Auriol Grayson.

The God In You

DARKNESS is only felt when you, my Sun,
Withdraw the probing dazzlement of love,
And being faint for truth I cannot run
Along the happy highways, but must move
In gloom-tight cul-de-sacs athirst for light,
While each void moment scampers on ahead
And Beauty, calling sadly, scents the night
With faint nostalgia, wistful words unsaid.

Then all the world surrenders to your touch,
The shadows are warm lips caressing me;
Creative thoughts, like knives, now hurt too much,
But as a martyr knowing hell can see
A certain heaven, I, in torment, feel
The God in you is mine—for me you kneel.

Guy Hayward Kirkus.

The Unknown

AZRAEL having sealed her secret eyes
And darkened with his wings her brooding face,
Has cast an utter benison of grace
On those madonna lips where smiling lies
Release transcendent. The still brow is wise
By all extremity. No mortal trace
Of pain, no fear survives divine embrace—
Desire is lost in peace, and sorrow dies.

Dreaming, she rests that young and weary head
Beyond the boundaries of night . . . So deep
Love's very arms have couched her with the dead
Upon a shadowy vast marriage bed
That she, whom the last angel laid asleep,
Knows not the land whereto he, pitying, sped.

Greenbelt, Maryland. *Margaret Beaufort.*

Cynic

WHO needs no heaven
Climbs not so far
That he may stumble
Over a star.

Nor will he suffer
Who loves not much
That failing fervour
In a lover's touch.

For him no wonder,
No winding stair
Leads up to moonlight
And the vision there.

Not a winged impulse
Out of its socket
Can disturb more than
Coins in his pocket.

There is no tentative
Moment can start
The child rock-climbing
To reach his heart.

And Death from him
Takes not a trick—
He merely collects
His hat and stick.

Howard Sergeant.

The Purport and Process of Contemporary Poetry

THIS is frankly a plea to the reactionary element for tolerance—not the tolerance of charity, but that of a better understanding. And in case the element is perturbed by a title which refers to "Contemporary Poetry" and a content which is concerned only with the poetry of the "Moderns", I could do worse than start from that apparent paradox.

In 1923 Dent's published *The Golden Book of Modern English Poetry*, an Anthology "selected and arranged by Thomas Caldwell". "I understand from Mr. Caldwell" wrote Lord Dunsany in his introduction "that one of his objects in making this collection was to show that the best of the poetry of the modern age is either classical or romantic in character, and not—as some critics would have it—of the realistic school". Of the poets represented in that Anthology nine only were born after 1890—Richard Aldington, Edmund Blunden, Robert Graves, W. N. Hodgson, Francis Ledwidge, Wilfred Owen, Edward Shanks, C. H. Sorley, and E. W. Tennant. Those represented who were born before 1890 included D. H. Lawrence and Ezra Pound. Hodgson, Ledwidge, Owen, Sorley and Tennant died young. What of the subsequent careers of the others? Richard Aldington proved a turncoat, if not a very important one; nice things are said about Robert Graves in *Horizon*, but nasty things in POETRY REVIEW; D. H. Lawrence is the titular head of a group of "new romantics" which includes Dylan Thomas and Henry Treece; whilst I need hardly remind you that Pound has been considered by many as the father of all modernism. Only Edward Shanks and Edmund Blunden remained faithful to the fold. Edward Shanks, I think, was never more than a minor poet; whilst Edmund Blunden, to use his own delightful statement, chose "from love's wide-flowering mountain-side this sprig of green, in which an angel shews", and has devoted himself whole-heartedly throughout the rest of his poetic career to illuminating the angel in the sprig. But I think I can go a step further than that and still have your agreement. For we are faced not only with the singular proposition of the last of the romantics developing into the first of the realists; those poets who were represented in *The Golden Book* really were the last of the traditional romantics; for no poetry comparable in significance has been written since in the traditional style by any poet born after 1890.

Traditional poetry has had its bad times in the past and has survived. I imagine the reactionary point of view is that this is a bad time. Without entering into any argument on that score, shall we see if we can agree on a working definition of traditional poetry? I do not imagine that you will object to Housman's definition of the function of poetry—that it is "to transfuse emotion—not to transmit thought, but to set up in the reader's sense a vibration corresponding to what was felt by the writer". I think it is a small step from there to a definition of traditional poetry such as:

> That form of expression in words which by its unity of metre, word-sound, and word-sense, induces in the mind of the reader the sensible reproduction of the emotion inherent in that unity.

And I imagine that we all recognise that the three constituents of the unity are variable in their respective degrees of influence—the metre, the sound, or the sense may be the dominating factor—and that the emotion is that inherent in the *unity* and not simply the emotion of the meanings of the words. The only question is, *what* emotion?

This is generally agreed to be indefinable; but it is not, for instance, the physical emotion of injury caused by loss which expresses itself in terms of tears. Is it the

next stage of emotion—the real emotion a person feels when he says he was "moved", which is the sensation of loss though not accompanied by injury and expresses itself in terms of the lump in the throat? Or is it something higher still, a pure emotion, experienced but not manifest?

The question is important, because Housman is not the only writer who believes that the function of poetry is to transfuse emotion. "The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an objective correlative; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion: such that, when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked." The writer of that passage was T. S. Eliot. Now the reactionary objection to poetry as that written by T. S. Eliot is that it does *not* evoke emotion; it does not evoke emotion because it is informed by an intellectual and not an emotional attitude, and because its language, its constructions and its metaphors are too obscure for their significance to be readily appreciated. Quite obviously there is a conflict here which needs explaining. It might be a conflict in the use of terms; but might it not also be a conflict as to the feeling of emotion itself?

In either case, I am afraid, I must take you for a plunge first into physics and then into philosophy. In his introduction to *The Nature of the Physical World,* Sir Arthur Eddington introduces us to two tables at which he is writing. The one is the table familiar to him from his earliest years, a thing of substance; the other is his scientific table. This scientific table is mostly emptiness. Sparsely scattered in that emptiness are numerous electric charges rushing hither and thither with considerable speed. There is nothing substantial about this scientific table, for the electric charges have no discoverable solidity and are, in fact, mere displays of force. It is not even a thing, for these displays have no reality save such as is given to them by the circumstance that they endure long enough to happen. So that in the physical world—the world we have proved by experiment but can never know with our senses—there are no objects; there are simply "events". These events succeed one another (or so we will say for the sake of simplicity), and by their duration achieve existence; but they do not stop happening, not for a moment: so that there never is anything actually completed by them, but there is only a continual process of "becoming" something.

Now some time before the physicists had established the world as a world of "becoming" whose sole reality was duration, a French philosopher, Henri Bergson, had already decided that this must be so. He found man's contact with this world only in what he called the *élan vital*—not in man's thinking brain, but in his intuitive unreasoning being. He did not refer to it as man's "spirit", and that is not exactly what he meant; but he did mean, you might say, something similar. This philosophy was attacked in 1927 from the traditional point of view by Wyndham Lewis (the philosopher, not the humorist) in a book called *Time and Western Man* because, he said, of what such a philosophy entailed. Here is a summary of his conclusions.

Time-philosophy emphasises the substitution of the mental for the physical and the movement of "mind" into what was "matter" in Shelley's day; for time is a conception of the mind and a thing of the mind, and travels in time occur in the head. To Bergson, time is mental and represents intensity, where space is extension. Life, to him, is duration, which occurs when we completely telescope the past into the present and make our life a fiery point eating into the future. Duration is inside us, not outside, and time-philosophy is antagonistic to dreaming

or remembering which reveals life as stretched out behind us as a sort of space. Change and interfusion are the keynotes of this conception. There are no objects, but a cluster of events and perspectives which shade off into each other and into others of the same to infinity. Reality is where things run into each other, in that flux; not where they stand out in concreteness. Pattern, with its temporal multiplicity and its chronological depth, is substituted for the thing with its one time and its spatial depth. The time-object, moving from point to point in time, and only spatial as it unfolds in memory, has to be lived, and has to be both subject and object at once. Implicit in this doctrine of time and change is the revolutionary doctrine of the progress of species. Moszkowski draws an interesting parallel between Einstein's destruction of the absolute and the rise of Bolshevism; and the basic theme of Spengler's *Decline of the West* is that all manifestations of Art and Science are political. Milennial politics have a very pervasive influence on philosophic thought; and the time-philosopher becomes a "progress" enthusiast of the most obvious political kind.

If that summary reminds you of a number of aspects of "modern" poetry which you most dislike, you have at least discovered that such poetry is the poetry of a mind imbued with the conception of "becoming". That was the complaint made by Wyndham Lewis before many of the aspects to which he refers became half so noticeable as they are to-day. But can you rightly blame the poet? How voluntary on his part has been the adoption of this philosophy ?

I think that in all the argument which has surrounded "modernism" for so many years the *process* of the production of poetry has been far too lightly regarded. Poetry is *not* a deliberate act. The "Form" of Beauty (as Professor Joad reminds us in his *Guide To Philosophy*) knows no law in its coming; it is the incalculable element in all art and can neither be compelled nor cajoled. Nor, obviously, can a work be informed with inherent emotion by a process which includes no excitement of the creator.

Joad quotes Professor Wallas as affirming four stages in the process of original inspiration in the world of art. The first is that of preparation, during which stage consciousness collects the relevant data and explores different avenues for a possible solution. The problem and data are transferred, during the second vital stage of incubation, to the *un*conscious mind. The solution is worked out by the unconscious mind and appears sooner or later in the form of inspiration, this stage being that of illumination. The fourth stage is that of execution, which he calls verification. The process of poetry is not quite so simple; for though the poet collects, through his living experience, his data, and explores, by his very being, the different avenues, he cannot compel so much as the subject-matter of his poem; but *all* data are transferred to the unconscious, from which there may or may not spring in due course the substance of a poem on some aspect of the collected data, but even that has been selected not consciously by the poet but by the poet's unconscious mind. Housman was very emphatic on this point, classing poetry as a "secretion", emphasizing that his poems came to him in whole phrases and even verses, and quoting Wordsworth as saying that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings and Burns as confessing that though he had two or three times composed from the wish rather than the feeling he had never succeeded to any purpose.

But the traditional poets are not alone in their emphasis. T. S. Eliot distinguishes between a poet's *conscious* effort in technical excellence (his stage of verification) and the accumulation and digestion of his experience (the stages of preparation

and incubation). Other "modern" poets talk of the "inner necessity", of the "central impetus" of a poem, of "psychological compulsion directed upon experience". Henry Treece thinks inspiration to be partly "Mr. Eliot's convergence of two co-ordinates"—the conscious and digestive stages mentioned above—and partly "another indefinable element, the nearest description of which I would call 'the shaping of the subconscious by the individual spirit' ". Whilst Dylan Thomas says that he "lets an image be made" to him, lets that image "breed another" and so on. These moderns are even so traditionally minded as to believe that the "form" of a poem is born of the unconscious in the original conception.

We are now face to face with the essential problem. These poets agree wholeheartedly with our definition of poetry (if we substitute in it some indication of rhythmic word movement to replace "metre"); they are not being deliberately irritating or naughty—their poetry comes from an inner source, and so far as they are aware their source is just as authentic as Housman's was. The trouble is that they themselves are new—as Mr. W. G. Bebbington pointed out in a recent article in POETRY REVIEW (*Of the Moderns Without Contempt*), though the essential truth of his statement seems to have been overlooked in the chorus of obloquy. For their awareness of becoming, and all that that entails, is not a mere gloss, or some deliberate and rather spectacular achievement. It could not even be called a part of their being—it *is* their being. It is "welded into our consciousness" said Sir Arthur Eddington. "If I grasp the notion of existence because I myself exist, I grasp the notion of becoming because I myself become. It is the innermost ego of all which *is* and *becomes*."

So that somewhere there has entered into the field of human intuition this awareness of becoming, and where it has entered it has changed man's emotional states; and it has produced a supplementary or substituted sensation which is most simply described as "thought as feeling". What could be called "intellectual imagination" has superseded or enlarged emotional imagination. It has become an inescapable element in modern man, and as such it is an inescapable element in the products alike of his mind and of his intuition. To rail at contemporary poetry for being what it is, is to rail at the contemporary awareness for existing; and that is about as sensible as railing at a pin because it pricks.

What, then, in conclusion? Firstly, as might be assumed, there are many and they grow in number for whom these poems *do* evoke emotion, and emotion at that of a very high order. So that it has been said, even between the covers of POETRY REVIEW, that, whilst traditional poetry has remained silent, these poets, not all but some, have produced an extremely important and significant body of verse.

Secondly, what of those reactionaries to whom this plea is addressed? It is possible that their grounds of objection to "modern" poetry are simply explained by the fact of their having themselves no awareness of the world of becoming; and this could be a plain biological fact, for the awareness is certainly new: though whether it is a new thing added to us in an evolutionary process or a new thing we have discovered in ourselves by the awakening of a new realisation I am not prepared at the moment to state. In that case, plainly enough, "modern" poetry is not for them. But there is another possibility, and in many cases it is the more probable. I could call it prejudice; but I prefer to think of it in terms of what physicists call "inertia". It is the complaint from which that man suffers who knows that he likes his sherry dark and cannot be persuaded to try it light.

This inertia breeds resentment. It is annoying that sometimes—not by any means all the time—these poets are difficult to understand. I am not going to minimise those difficulties where they arise—they are the outcome of the nature of the flow from the poet's unconscious mind in which, as in dreams, the normal connections tend to become upset; and it is possible that they are no more valid than the sequences of dreams, which seem proper enough at the time. The poets themselves are fully aware of this danger; but Housman was very sceptical about the value of applying the intellect to poetical emission (he said the intellect could not be trusted even to recognise poetry when it saw it). And in any general statement of opinion that these poets ought to try to make themselves more clear we are up against two problems at the outset—do they really know what they *mean* themselves? and more clear to whom?

These problems have always provided one of the battle-grounds of poetry. As I insisted in my suggested definition, poetry is a *unity* in which form or sound or sense may be the predominant factor but which cannot exist except as a unity. You will find that difficulty most of all with Blake; you can write a precis of a poem by Keats, though the precis would hardly be recognisable as having anything to do with poetry, but you cannot paraphrase Blake at all. And if there are those, and there are, who see poetry in the productions of the "moderns" then they also see meaning, since that is in the unity. Coleridge believed it was best that poetry should be imperfectly understood; and understanding has little to do with the elusive "Form" of Beauty. There is nothing very original in Keats' idea about magic casements, but the total effect of his lines is, emotionally, almost melodramatic. Which is even more confusing when one is compelled to record that the "sense" appeal is not to the emotions at all but purely to the imagination.

But I think the crux of the problem to be no more than this. The experience of the traditional poets has now become part of the common experience of mankind in general, and is thus recognisable without any particular effort. But it is not instinctively recognisable. The fact that so many people do appreciate traditional poetry owes more than is commonly credited to the fact that traditional poetry is "taught" as a subject in schools. That teaching is also the foundation of prejudice. You have learned to like your sherry dark. If you expect to find in light sherry what you have known and loved in dark, naturally you will be disappointed. It may be that you really do dislike light sherry; but it may also be that you are forbidding your possible delight in an exquisite new sensation by trying to impose upon it conditions it is not in its nature to fulfil—that, as Bergson suggests we far too often do, you are falsifying your intuition by the deliberate application of your intellect.

So sip again, reactionaries, not at the brim but deep in the glass of this poetry of the world of becoming. It is much too exciting an experience to run the risk of missing.

JOHN NANCE.

Two admirable new volumes summarise and expand what we have been saying for two score years. If a man says, "I see nothing in poetry", the temptation is to answer crudely, "Neither does a cow". It would be better to refer such limited persons to *The Vision Splendid*, by Nevile Watts (Sheed & Ward, 7s. 6d. net) who, in several finely written essays, writes out of the experience derived from thirty years' efforts to cure the poetry-blind in a world increasingly conditioned and menaced by science, in which the fountains whereby the spirit of

man is perennially refreshed are visited less and less. We particularly commend the chapters on The Value of Poetry and Poetry and Childhood.

The other complementary is *Feet on the Ground*, being an approach to modern verse, by Margaret J. O'Donnell (Blackie, 8s. 6d. net) which is virtually an anthology amply annotated, doing a splendid service to poets and poetry. Miss O'Donnell deals fairly with form and content, providing a very sensible introduction to poetry generally and modern poetry in particular and to the intelligent reading of it. Both books recognise that poetry should be a universal possession, that the poets themselves have not the last word on its appreciation, and that poetry is a virile art, all kinds of men in action—soldiers, sailors, airmen, adventurers, explorers—having written it or proved their enjoyment of it because poetry is the most vigorous, most concentrated, most expressive and comprehensive kind of speech, illuminating and companionable. These two authors illustrate these values and are reliable guides to their appreciation.

Nursery Rhymes for Certain Times, with drawings by Elinor Darwin and an introduction by Walter de la Mare (Faber, 8s. 6d.), is most delightful in content and format, surely the most completely satisfying collection of its kind. Familiar as many of these 150 rhymes and jingles must be to all grown-up children, probably the larger number will be quite new and some of the old favourites appear in new versions, not always an improvement. But whether recognisable or not, these Methuselahs of rhymes, almost all of no known parentage, are "as incapable of ageing as of being supplanted". And we agree further with their modern emulator that "they free the fancy, charm tongue and ear, delight the inward eye, and many of them are tiny masterpieces of verbal craftsmanship—of the latest devices in rhythm, indeed—the 'sprung' " and "however fantastic and nonsensical they may be, they are a direct short-cut into poetry itself".

A contrasting volume, also from Fabers, is *Marjorie Fleming* (10s. 6d.), the "Pet Marjorie" of Dr. John Brown and Mr. L. McBean and other earlier biographers of this brilliant child of Journal fame. Miss Oriel Malet presents sympathetically and vividly this sensitive yet gay and loving little girl and her environment, her period and her people, a vivid reconstruction of a moving story. The night before her death at the age of eight years and eleven months, she said, "Father I will repeat something to you". The lines were from Burns, whose poems and Scott's she knew intimately, "but it was all Marjory". Then she begged, "Please give me my slate: I want to write a poem"—a frequent exercise. Though her fingers could hardly press on the chalk, she quickly wrote a poem of fourteen lines, "To her loved cousin on the Author's recovery". . . . She laid down her pencil with a sigh. "I think I am a little tired", she said and was still.

We hear that prefaces to Shakespeare's plays are being widely read. This new public will eagerly welcome the addition of *Henry IV* to the Cambridge University Press New Shakespeare (two vols., 8s. 6d.), edited by John Dover Wilson, because of the individual introduction and comprehensive stage-history printed in Part I. We believe Dr. Johnson speaks for our day as well as for the 18th century when he declares, "None of Shakespeare's plays are more read than the first and second parts of Henry IV", which according to Mrs. Elizabeth Inchbald, all men admire and most women dislike. We have heard of similar instances to that recorded by Dr. Wilson of low morale and sticky atmosphere in training camps being dissipated by a part reading of this manly play. We hope the paper supply will be equal to the demand for this new edition with its wealth of notes and elucidations.

Ploughing

HERE where the ploughland wavers to the wood,
Where feathered larches pluming from the bud
Will fan the sleeping Spring, I love to watch
Amos the ploughman cutting through the land—
His horses know his voice, obey his hand:
"Come up my Flower! Steady, Glory there!"
I hear him now, calling his chestnut mare
And Glory, pride of his old heart's delight—
The grey colt sired by famous Silver Knight
That staggered, wooden-legged, by Flower's side,
Growing in dappled splendour, crested pride
To fling the day a thick, dawn-coloured mane.
And sitting here I see them pull again
Across the field, on, on, heads up and down
With rhythmic wave-swell as each curving, brown,
Flat-falling furrow breaks towards a sky
Clear-rinsed with rain, blue as a baby's eye.
Slow seagulls poise above the steel-churned wake
Until the plough becomes a ship to break
Through waves more still than those on Galilee.
And I can sail away with headstrong Spring
To distant continents—I hear the ring
Of shoe on stone echo from dream's deep well
And sound in a ship's bell . . . .

And here are jagged shores of ancient Greece
Where Jason sailed to find the Golden Fleece
In Argo, that first ship whose bows were made
From pine trees of Mount Pelion.
Now drifting through a land of lotus buds,
I ride the Yellow river's rising floods
Through straight bamboos, and strangling lily roots.
Flowers red as wine and wine-press waiting fruits
Hang from a perfumed wall . . . .
And here I'm captive in some fearful tower
Of silence—locked in India's secret power,
Till looking up, I see what stabs the breath—
The Himalayas frozen tent of death
Impenetrable takes the height to heaven,
And chills all earthly senses. Now I'm given
New sight for flaming flowers in the jungle;
And feel the thrust of living in a tangle
Of ferns, and creeping plants, and trees, and grasses,
Of rivers, swamps, and treacherous dark mosses
Where soft a cushion-footed tiger passes,
Streaked with amber sunlight, striped with shadow,
Black and gold as drone bees in a meadow,
But hungry, angry, seeking, mating, sleeping.
And now I hear the noise of wild tribes beating

The fire-crazed night with throbbing gongs and drums,
Keeping the hours awake till morning comes . . .
Another day with blazing rods strikes down
The dazzled desert heat, and everywhere
Is blinded by the sun whose lidless glare
Withers all thought of greenness in despair.
And pitiless as stone the Sphinx makes mock
Of little human lives ordered by clock
And season, blown by circumstance and fate
Each moment nearer to the certain gate
That clangs to with the final ring: 'Too late!'
And now a white-fanged wind tears over screes,
And howls down chimneys on the Pyrenees;
Then brushes downward through the bristled pines
To a country warm with blood and red with wines,
Where white inns cling like flowers on mountain passes,
And ring with serenades and emptied glasses.
Dark peasants toil all day among the vines,
And harvest bitter oranges, and grow
Bitter and old themselves who only know
A tight-skinned poverty that shrinks and sours
Their beauty . . .
The matador is pelted with their flowers.
Here is a bull whose virile bulk has grown
In fertile fields of peace, challenged and thrown,
Become a sweating hulk with scarlet cord
Loosed in the burning sand, a span of broad
And sickled horns, sharp hooves that lately thrust
White lilies earthward, all to be earth's dust.
The tense arena writhes with frenzied faces—
One bull has died in blood; the blood of races,
Of nations yet must flow—why should they pity,
They, soon to stare upon each smoke-blind city,
At skewered corpses, ruin, famine, shame,
With haggard eyes, they without pride or name,
Or town or countryside to call their own?

And now the whole earth bleeds, all nations groan,
Suffer, and burn, and starve, and curse, and die
To overwhelm the Nazi tyranny.
All Europe's ditches choke and ooze with dead;
And ravaged fields of snow are blotched with red.
White mummied soldiers trapped in northern lands
Lie headless, legless, without arms or hands,
Staring in stiffened anguish from their bands
Of steely cold,
Never to stand again, never to pray,
Never to rot till spring winds thaw away
Embalming ice.
O murderous battlefields of pain and vice!
O patient earth absorbing even death

To feed the living, giving blood and breath
To other beings! Now the war has spread
Black desolation with diseased and dead
And breathing scarecrows, war's machine must rust
While cornfields spring again from richer dust
Than man has ever dug in common earth . . .

Back to the plough, and to the aches of birth,
Back to the English scene that rests the heart
In all we love—Here in an English glade
Of knotty oaks and grass as bright as jade,
A gin-clear stream sounding like silver shells
Among the tree trunks, rushes on and swells
To meet a dunnock's song from the beech hedge
That russet as a fox runs round the edge.
But stripped of dreams we must make terms with soil,
Living again like Amos. Blood and toil
And tears and sweat were promised, and remain
Our blunt-edged weapons till a newer grain
Is harvested and battled for through loss,
And labour. In this English field fenced round
With thorns I know the humble earth is crowned
With the unfailing Spring no man has found. *Phoebe Hesketh.*

Summer on the River

I

UPON the summer day the willows drift,
And on the silver waters of the stream
The children's shadowed legs are wavering
Within the flowing current, warm and green.

Their bare limbs crush the mint to hot, blue, scent,
And dragonflies, like armoured knights, fly there
Above the stones and mud where minnows swim,
Like darting moths within a liquid air.

II

See—down the cloudy bosom of the stream
There comes the snowy swan, a moving flower,
Below her sings the music of the weir
And to its beats she slowly drifts. The hour
Is full and gold and smells of falling hay
From where the old horse and the mower pass
Like Time itself through all the lovely wild
Of pearly ox-eyes in the dying grass.

The paint of faded red and blue, the "whoa"
The old man shouted, comes across the river.
The lovely light flows round them, secretly,
Bearing the sounds and tints to me, for ever.

III

The thin, fine lavender of smoke, now rises
From our small fire. The happy children run
And gather curled black sticks and acorns dry.
Their movements are a dance beneath the sun.

Into an hour of rest and peace I sink
Where happiness and beauty merge, and hold
The flawless moment like a flower, whose heart
Is mine among the melting white and gold.

Music and scent and light are borne away
On some eternal current—yet remain
Singing around me, touched to ecstasy,
Until the coloured moment turns to pain.

IV

Now softly laps the water in the reeds
And in the holes, half hidden, gleams an eye,
Sudden and bright of peering rat. The wind
Moves suddenly within the breathless sky
And bears the downy clouds upon the brink
To swoon there with the swan. The fading rose
Drops its soft shells upon the darkened stream
To join the last faint brightness where it glows.

The children now no longer run, but pause,
Idling among the meadow-sweet, and soon
They watch above the bare back of the hill,
The milky radiance of the rising moon.

V

The swan, with arrogant and arching neck
Shakes the black water into jewels, and sails
Upon the moonlight's opal path. A moth
Hovers above the snapping fish and trails
Its powdered wings into the moon's white fire.
The scent of clover rises, red and sweet,
Around the children's heads. They whisper now
And tread the damp, bruised grass with quiet feet.

From the far meadow, too, the mower has gone
And pale and limp the swathes of hay now lie
Abandoned to the first star and the dew.
The horse's hoof-beats fade away and die,
Lost in the gathered music of the night.
The weir sounds louder notes, and flowers move
Like restless heads. The leaves are turned to hands
Trailing and clutching . . . in the sky, above

Our sheltering oak and tiny, smoking fire,
The owls and bats of night sweep down. A wind
Runs coldly on the stream, with shadowed feet,
And suddenly, the summer seems behind.

Marguerite Tudor Williams.

"But Ye Would Not"

IN the time of the bitterness of Nations I write,
Having no new hope to offer,
No immediate salve against evil.
(Why trouble the waters of the pool, Angelic Visitant,
Where none comes to be healed?)
Shall I mourn over darkened cities or over
The loveliness of cities level with the ground?
Even so did they lay waste Babylon
In the time of her pride,
In the hour of beauty.
(But how can we build again those cities
With the labour of the old and crippled,
Under the hard eyes of our children?)
Neither shall I mourn over the broken bodies of men;
But over their broken spirit.
Over their rejection of hope;
Their acceptance of despair.
For the hope that has been in the world for two thousand years
Is valid not only yesterday
But to-day,
Not only for time
But in Eternity.
Et in saecula saeculorum.
Amen.
The Angel comes,
The waters of the pool are shaken,
But no man descends,
(As in the empty church a solitary lamp keeps watch
Before the High Altar
In the congregation of shadows).

L. E. Brodie.

Love's Bondage

(She gazes at her wristlet)

FETTER of gold my lover bound
My meek, surrendering arm around;
Bade the bright circle, day and night,
Be ever-watchful sentinel,
Be never-sleeping acolyte,
To count my heart-beats and to tell
How every pulse rebinds the spell,
And every throb renews in me
Thraldom of glad captivity.

Edward Vandermere Fleming.

The Poet Pleads with Time

I FEEL the internal frost that paralyses
The source of inspiration where it springs
Deep in the heart; to-day alone there rises
A dull response, an apathy that clings,—
A chain where once were wings.

The years are like a desolating winter
That strikes the blossom down and strips the tree,
And blinds and binds in ice without a splinter
The pools that mirrored nature's mystery
In days sunlit and free.

Give me again the sweet, sincere emotion
That made experience exquisite with song,
When tides of feeling swept me like the ocean,
And life was glorious, and joy was long,
And pity dark and strong.

When ecstasy sleeps and can no more awaken,
When agony can stir the soul no more,
When tears are drained, and laughter is forsaken,
And knees bent not to plead or to adore,
Then death is at the core.

Now cleverness has ousted contemplation,
Where vision trembled skill is now astute;
Restore to me ardour and inspiration,
Or take from my unworthy hands the lute
And strike my music mute!

Nancy Pollok.

Nightmare

"*Vidi te in somnis fracta, mea vita, carina*
Ionio lassas ducere rore manus."—PROPERTIUS.

I SEE you in the broken consciousness
Of dreams, my lady, shipwrecked in the drift
Of memory, your long hair sea-weed bright
With brine like burning tears that fill my eyes
Mourning the death of love, and love in me.
And you, I always see you in my dreams
Wearily breasting the waves that break
Over your head; over your cried confession
Of forgotten wrongs against me while you lived,
I see with horror, past forgetting, blood
Upon the hands emerging from the tide,
I hear you calling faintly my name . . .
Then terror always washes underwater
The rock from which I was about to leap
To save you, and I hear my ringing cry
When I awaken in the dark of night.

Princeton University. *R. J. Schoeck.*

Poets and Pretenders

THERE can be little doubt that our delight in the sun owes much to the frequency with which it rains in these delectable but damp islands, and by the same token it is more than probable that much of our pleasure in the poetry of Herbert Palmer is due to the prevailing murkiness of our modern English poetic weather. When all is said we like to see our way about, having senses which, in the normal person, object to being mocked but, no doubt, it is good to rest the eyes (and the understanding) at times. Perhaps therefore our Welsh and other rain-makers have their temporary value, if only for their hard-working exhalations of intellectual fog through which we may sense (for we may see nothing) the bottomless depression into which vanity or ambition may lead. To be a poet one must be an unconscious user of words heard in the misty hinterland of consciousness which still, by some miracle, are full of light. Diamonds are found deep and though they may be flawed will yet gleam. Our incoherent relishers of the esoteric hear none of their rubbish in the antechambers of the spirit; Heaven forbid, for they would be in a parlous state if they did. It is, of course, merely an intellectual omelette mixed in the mind which they offer us and they are much too busy talking to listen to anything so outmoded and "pseudo" classical as their possibly immortal souls.

So we continue, in the words of an artless contemporary, to air our "prejudices" and we do it the more vigorously in this mumbling wilderness for that we are for the moment armed with this veritable excalibur of Mr. Herbert Palmer's new book, which he names, aptly enough, *A Sword in the Desert* (Harrap, 6s.). The title is not fortuitous, for the poet, undiminished in vigour by years, lays about him with a flashing blade which sings in the sunshine with the force and beauty of his strokes. To some men is given a quality which resists deterioration to the end; but only to those who are content to serve a more immortal power than the mind. Mr. Palmer is one of these and when he rests from his assault upon the Philistine he reclines upon the banks of streams, or in meadows among flowers, and whets his sword anew at the knee of a mother earth whose counsel and comfort are as potent to him now as in his youth:

> But by the ivied bridge the dun-flies gleam;
> The brown trout turn his speckles to the stream,
> And small stones stun my dark street-troubled dream.
> Only where water runs I can forget.
> Fins, little wings, and pebbles pearl Time's net.
> What sometimes was, came oft, and shall be yet.

Yet in the main there is a note of unwearied conflict in this book. The battle is still to the strong and Herbert Palmer is a man of his age, shirking no issue and seeking no ivory tower wherein to dream while the world staggers by. He is a fighter, skilled in that greatest of arts which can touch the souls of men, at once sane, serene and sensitive and still undismayed by the multiplying evidences of man's divorcement from all three. That one may live long and ripen soundly in this world of ours is a tribute to the integrity of greatness, too rare, alas, but still indicating a battle not yet lost, and reviving to our diminished hopes. Let us quote one poem in full, "The Wounded Hawk", not for your pleasure only but for the typical philosophy which it expresses and which is the very substance of the man:

> I have with fishing rod and line
> Roved many banks and had great play;
> But there are shadows in my mind,
> And one will stick till dying day.

I saw one morn near Muker bridge,
  Beside the wood I sought to pass,
A great hawk—crippled in the wing—
  Spread wide and struggling on the grass—

Shot by some keeper as it flew
  In cruel ecstasy of Spring.
It was of strange and mottled hue—
  A crag-land, evil, splendid thing,

Of crooked beak and claws like steel.
  The wood danced jigs if it knew aught.
"But can the smaller creatures feel
  As you appear to feel?" I thought.

Such anguish filled each great round eye
  It wrung my heart and rocked my brain
I longed for powers within the Sky
  To give it strength to fly again—

To soar and swoop and hunt and prey,
  Fulfil its nature to the core;
The sunlight seemed to leave the day;
  Upon my joy there closed a door.

It glared at me in fear and pain,
  Then beat its wings and strove to fly.
I stopped awhile, but could not aid;
  Then thought, as I went slowly by—

We're pages from the self-same book;
  But you—you're done. I wait God's wish.
One hunts with beak, and one with hook,
  And one with word—birds, knaves, fools, fish.

From this fresh maturity we may pass, perhaps without undue incongruence, to a freshness of youth wherein however there is little of that immaturity which we associate with tender years. John Whitehead, who presents us with *Flash and Outbreak* (Collins, 6s.) is barely yet of man's estate, having left Winchester in 1943 at the age of eighteen, but his work has that ageless quality which all authenticity has and it would be impossible to deduce so ephemeral a personal detail as his lack of years from it, excepting perhaps in a certain cerebral flavour noticeable in some of his poems. The young do not easily refrain from deliberate intellectual composition, the impatience of nonage will not wait for the subjective uprising; and the avid ear is attuned better to the intellectual than to the emotional voice. Thus there is much that is a little pompous in expression in this book, an appearance of careful verbal selection, aiming at distinction, whereby those gifted with words sow their wild poetic oats, but which those more deeply gifted put away with other childish things as they grow wiser. It cannot be said too often that poetry is not a literary art saving that it must use words and with a superlative nicety of choice. But this is but the threshold of that mysterious

world, the point of departure only, through and by which we pass from the intellectual to the emotional or, in other words, from the superficial to the profound:

> The hollow men, edged with philistine's malice,
> With sour grapes on their tongues, conspire together,
> Calling us to betray what makes them small.

Let us join these hollow men and ask Mr. Whitehead to betray this literary virtuosity and to embrace a simplicity through which alone we shall perceive his spirit. He will do so inevitably we believe, for already we can observe his own dawning perception that the subconscious can select words and phrases much better than the conscious mind; and in such things as "Unarm, Eros" we perceive him listening and transcribing, and no longer toiling and moiling in the literary dust:

> Each year the spring will come, the flowers like girls
> Admire themselves in mirrors and the birds
> Will flute their nonsense to love-lonely poets;
> But we who cried for death shall heed them not
> We shall not taste the sweets and curds of peace
> Nor listen to the fairy-tales of love.
> Our bodies lie beneath too many hedgerows,
> Too many tides have moved across our sleep.
> We have no home, so why should we revisit
> The golden garden where our childhood learnt
> The hidden presence of the thorn and nettle?
> Or walk the streets that laughed our youth away?
> We who have twenty years, have no to-morrow,
> Only a cold rehash of yesterday;
> But as we walk between you, contemplate
> The casual price you paid to lose a world.

We would suggest to this poet that he is unwise to neglect rhyme so often in his work. This old device is not very difficult to master, even to perfection, and its musical value is high, adding strength to the strong, poignancy to the pitiful, and gaiety to the gay. Moreover its practice gives one time to discover unsuspected beauty by imposing delay, and like all true art techniques has a value far greater than its superficial ornament confers.

The neglect of what are now termed classical forms and prosodic devices is, of course, a sign of an age which wants to be streamlined against effort. We must all arrive quickly now and forget that it was more blessed to travel. The effect of this upon poetry is the same as that of material mass production on craftsmanship; and the only quality which we value now is quantity, or at any rate ease of production. The world of art resists this prevailing frustration of true creativeness in some measure; but to-day there are many painters who would not, or could not, learn to draw, and plenty of musicians who disdain or are deaf to harmony. We do not forget, of course, those industrious persons who rely entirely upon technical skill, who do in fact follow the ancient cults, but cannot find inspiration; but with these we have no concern at the moment. Our lament is for those others who have been seduced from an apprenticeship which alone could have equipped them for the full realisation of their gifts and given their work its maximum influence upon the world. Consequently we are always glad to find a book in which there is evidence of another and older spirit. Such an one is *Clay Speaks of the*

Fire, by Edmund Lobo (Williams and Norgate, 6s.), for besides many poems in various classical forms there are quite a few sonnets, and if these are not always in strict physical conformity with Petrarch, they are often, if not always, fine technical performances. Let us quote "Cabochon", a mixture of octave distantly Petrarchan and sestet neither that nor Shakespearean although adorned with the master's final couplet:

Beyond the hills, beyond the curving moon
  Beyond the waters where they touch the mist
  Of evening's gold, and purple amethyst,
The wild swift sails rest, the dark sand is strewn,
The fishers draw their nets, and scatter night
  In silver flashes. And amongst the leaves
  Of tamarisk and myrtle none perceives
The lips that touch to make a greater light.

Light in this gloom that shows your happy eyes,
  New stars of colonnaded loveliness.
  What paltry lover, drunken to the bliss
That Omar knew, would search the jewelled skies
  For reason's cold unreason? Drink once more—
  Sink swiftly, lover, to love's drowsy shore.

It is a pity, surely, not to go the whole way, submitting oneself to the full rigour of the disciplines demanded of the sonneteer by those whose lyrical spirits invented these exigent forms. It is almost impossible to acquit Mr. Lobo of compromising sometimes with his difficulties, and this is more shameful in a poet than in anyone else. We certainly believe he will write better sonnets when he denies himself such liberty.

From the Pittsburgh Centre of our Society comes a substantial volume, *Life Triumphant*, by Elizabeth Browne (Torch Press, dols. 1.50). This is a rather New World mixture of ancient and modern, meticulously rhymed but often quite careless of rhythm and moreover too content with the surface of things and the superficial responses of humanity to them. Indeed Elizabeth Browne is not more present in her poems than you or anyone else for she has not yet learned to wait for her own deeper responses before writing her poems. She is an observer, objectively assiduous to record what she sees and thinks. This is the fundamental error. Introversion and the slow assimilation of exterior stimuli into the subconscious is the only road to true poetic expression. That, and the necessity for patient waiting for the resurgent impulse from within, that impulse which comes with words ready fashioned, is the poet's hard fate; and one made no easier by facility in expression or technical accomplishment, in both of which Elizabeth Browne is adept.

Another volume from Henry Forbes, called *Trumpets and the New Moon* (Fortune Press, 6s.), exhibits no very marked advance upon his previous work, some of which has been reviewed in these pages. Yet there is an improvement and he can certainly be given credit for the technical mastery which he has attained over the Shakespearean sonnet. This volume is mainly filled with them and their only lack is of that fire without which indeed the sonnet is not to be achieved in any true sense. Mr. Forbes is far too facile, he writes away with an unfailing ease, coining good lines and phrases without stint and yet, because he withholds

himself and gives us nothing but words with which to arouse our emotions, we remain unmoved. He is a good example of an objectively inspired literary man apt, perhaps too apt, in his medium, who could be relied upon to make a sonnet at any time and upon almost any theme. He will never become a poet by writing verse, even of this quality. To become that he must identify himself much more thoroughly with his subjects and write only when these have moved him beyond the reach of his own virtuosity.

The first short poem in *Within the Thunder*, by Hugo Dewar (Porcupine Press, 3s. 6d.) strikes a truer note. There is a quiet bitterness in it, not unfashionable to-day, which because it is not underscored does not offend by familiarity but rings with a sincere personal conviction. We gladly print "The Unknown Soldier (Request to a well-known Politician)":

Raise him no tomb; grave no name there,
Lay not a wreath, nor speech declaim there—
Half-truths and lies to twist his story,
Turn to account a dead man's glory.

All that he loved and most that loved him
Grows in the grass and flow'rs above him.
They that have missed him, they that mourned him,
Need not a word from those that scorned him.

So let him sleep, by you forgotten;
Earth shall grow rich as flesh goes rotten;
Memories fade as flowers flourish;
Sorrow go past with nought to nourish.

But not everything in this book is as good as this, indeed as one reads on, the conviction grows that much of it came from an imaginative source only and reaches us, therefore, tamely and without significance. Verse from this intellectual stable may be simple and unpretentious, as this is, but unless the poet's imagination be potent enough to wring his withers as he thinks, he will never wring ours; and poetry upon tragic themes which leaves one cold is but a waste of words, however well-phrased it may be.

There is no doubt that a poetic form may adorn and even partly redeem an unpoetic utterance. Beyond the gain of that compression which such forms exact, whereby the reader is relieved of unnecessary labour, there is undoubtedly something to be said for a metrical presentation of prose whenever the theme may lend itself to that treatment. Prose does not thus become poetry, and so need not be resented unduly on that account, whatever the author may think. There are times when the theme, hackneyed but noble, may itself excuse whatever guise in which it may be presented to us. So it is with *The Flowering of the Rod*, by H. D. (Oxford University Press, 4s.). Upon a mystical, pseudo-sacred theme, the author has chosen to write it in two line verses, metreless, rhymeless and at times prosaically worded, which really seem, in some manner, to suit it. With that however we are not directly concerned. Our business is to decide whether it comes within the bounds of poetry as we should define them. The publishers appear to think that it does, but if poetry be considered as something which has certain definite forms, adhering to established rules, and demanding a particular treatment on the one hand and, on the other, making its appeal

from emotion to emotion, then we unhesitatingly say that it does not. For on neither hand does H. D. gain admission. Consider the following:

She said, I have heard of you;
He bowed ironically and ironically murmured,
I have not had the pleasure,
His eyes now fixed on the half-open door;
She understood; this was his second rebuff
But deliberately, she shut the door;
She stood with her back against it;
Planted there, she flung out her arms, . . .

Yet the thing has interest, is graphic, and is certainly not without appeal. Our excerpt is neither typical nor exceptional and serves to indicate with sufficient fidelity a general quality which puts it, certainly, beyond the purview of this critical analysis.

And now for something vastly different, so different indeed that it is as vastly refreshing. We have received from the Warden of Clayesmore School the first number of what is, we hope, to be a serial record of verse written by pupils of that establishment. We congratulate the School upon this departure, not, happily, unparalleled elsewhere, from the more beaten paths of scholastic life, because we believe the world to be more direly in need than ever before in its history of a renewal of that close contact of man with his own soul which has been so grievously hindered by his growing reliance upon expediency for both governance and personal conduct. Whatever may be the sins of the poet he at least will be aware of the truth and in that vision is the assurance of safety. But let us consider the poems. There is in all of them a considerable expressive and imaginative power, and a well defined rhythm, sometimes not simple, which well enough confirms an oft repeated conviction of ours that the traditional poetic forms are natural to us when we feel impelled to utterance under strong stimulus. We should single out a boy of sixteen for special mention, and for quotation a poem written in his birth month, last November. We commend in it both the simplicity which uses the barely sufficient word always, which achieves many quite satisfying lines with them, and which finishes with a splendid finality which gives his lament a quality of sincerity not always apparent elsewhere in this little publication. The author's name is Bright Paul and here is his unnamed poem:

They did not die for glory, though 'tis theirs;
They did not die for fame, which also dies;
They did not die, that we at home might say:
'Tis England, where each English dead now lies.

We shall remember not their hard fought fight
Against the fearful evils of the age,
Nor the reforms they helped to bring about,
Nor what they wrote upon Time's ample page.

We shall forget as Time goes silent by
The things they did, their own peculiar ways
Their faces, how they smiled and how they talked:
We shall forget, too soon, with fleeting days.

Although forgetful, needs must we remember,

While yet in life our various paths we tread,
"Great was their love: no man alive has greater.
They proved their friendship: and they now lie dead."

The youngest contributor is R. A. Elliott, who at the tender age of 12 years writes several pieces in a modern manner quite unusual in one so young. His gift of expression is considerable but what might be called the poetic content of his contributions is slight. His themes were mainly provided by the blitz, but he seems to have observed its horrors with all the objectivity of normal boyhood, and his work is remarkable only for a literary attainment astonishing in one so young. There are many other good things in this Record, and before we leave it finally we would observe that one of the competitors, D. Cameron Brown, has therein a poem called "Gulls", which attracted us; but since the Warden has sent us a poem by this sixteen-year-old boy, "Alectryon", bound separately with another called "The Tale of the Lombardy Poplars" by J. R. Steer, who is the same age, we will comment upon these. The first is a classical piece in blank verse expressed with an easy grace, its chief fault being a lack of sufficient correspondence between line length and punctuation. There is a subtle trick in this and we extend no suggestion that there should be no overlap of sentence from line to line. It is better, however, to avoid awkwardnesses like the following:

He kept his vigil in the dark, and did
Not doze.

We prefer Mr. Brown's poem "Gulls". It has more genuine personal feeling and is not so polished a literary achievement. Mr. Steer's poem, "The Tale of the Lombardy Poplars", is also a classical piece, irregularly but well rhymed and technically well done. It is a very creditable performance indeed for one so young, but we think it unfortunate to set boys such themes or to encourage the choice of them for the creation of poetry. We do not suppose there is any desire at Clayesmore to combine instruction with poetic creation, for that would be to frustrate the latter entirely, leaving no more than the glitter of literary achievement. It is our opinion, based upon much experience, that poetry, like the wind, bloweth where it listeth, and may be neither constrained nor tutored.

Constraint may of course be applied internally, and the result from the poetic point of view will be equally ruinous. We refer, of course, to self-conscious writing in which there appears to have been too great an effort expended in the selection of language. Like the too well-dressed person this repels, and words, like clothes, should be adequate but casual seeming. *Symphonic. Poems*, by Salvatore Cutino, printed in Los Angeles (dols. 2.00), suffers from this extreme eloquence and also from an excess of declamatory fervour which fatigues the reader with a vehemence louder than sincerity. Quite otherwise is *The Way We Think*, by Katherine French Fedigan, printed in Chicago. This is as richly sentimental as it is superficial, and the list of acknowledgments for permission to reprint suggests to us that our American cousins have a much sweeter tooth than we have.

Anthologies continue to multiply, both of old-established classical masterpieces and of selections of modern poems. The latter, we think, serve a useful purpose in a world deluged with verse, good, bad and indifferent which it would be impossible for any one person to survey comprehensively. That many assiduous critical persons should perform this service for the general public is a meritorious thing and provides a fitting recognition for good work buried perhaps under a mountain (not Parnassus) of the mediocre. Messrs. R. N. Currey and R. V. Gibson provide us with the latest good deed of this kind with *Poems from India*.

by members of the Forces (Oxford University Press, 8s. 6d.), and include as a contributor, among others well known to us, the Viceroy himself, our own President. We shall not deny ourselves the pleasure of quoting the President's entirely characteristic sonnet, "For the Madonna of the Cherries", for it has that typical flavour possessed by all sincere, unmannered utterance, by which we may encounter the man himself:

Dear Lady of the Cherries, cool, serene,
Untroubled by our follies, strife and fears,
Clad in soft reds and blues and mantle green,
Your memory has been with me all these years.

Long years of battle, bitterness and waste,
Dry years of sun and dust and Eastern skies,
Hard years of ceaseless struggle, endless haste,
Fighting 'gainst greed for power and hate and lies.

Your red-gold hair, your slowly smiling face
For pride in your dear son, your King of Kings,
Fruits of the kindly earth, and truth and grace,
Colour and light, and all warm lovely things—

For all that loveliness, that warmth, that light,
Blessed Madonna, I go back to fight.

There are many things in this volume which if space permitted we should quote and quite a few which we should not, for it seems to be the duty of the anthologist to eschew personal predilection and to cater for all tastes; but we cannot omit mention of a fine poem by John Gawsworth, "Cleopatra to Iras". This has all that strong, ascetic economy which we have noticed before in this poet's work and we will quote its two concluding verses to justify our preference since we have no space for more:

Caesar, a God to Rome,
But scarce a God to me!
When will my conqueror come?
And when shall I be free?

He who enters the gate
Of my voluptuous sense
Needs to be more than great,
Needs—to have innocence!

Another anthology but of an unusual sort, since it is a collection of extracts from one long ten thousand line poem by one author, James Hurnand, has reached us. Compiled by the capable hand of G. Rostrevor Hamilton (Cambridge University Press, 7s. 6d.) from a little-known poem which was discovered by him in the London Library, its lively philosophy will now amuse and instruct a larger audience than it seems to have reached in its two previous editions (circa 1870). The enterprise is a happy one, for there is a vigorous and artless quality about Mr. Hurnand's blank verse which depicts the man's character and opinions with a most refreshing clarity. This, indeed, is the poem's real attraction, for James Hurnand's flashes of poetry are as unconscious as they are rare. He had enough to do in the unburdening of a simple but reflective mind at such length without the labour, if labour it be, of endeavouring to be poetical about it. But he was

certainly careful to write a technically good and pellucidly clear blank verse and with this and an incorruptible sincerity he achieved a poem which must be unique in our language.

Mr. Hamilton edits this enormous work for us but his extracts range over so various a field that we are assured we have lost nothing but labour by his industry. No prejudice nor foible of the author can be missing, nor the account of any place or event which was of interest to him. His gusto is remarkable, when it is remembered that the poem was not begun until he had reached the age of 59 nor finished until some ten years later. Here is a short extract in condemnation of pipe smoking, which is all we have space for, but which is completely typical of one who, for all his late marriage, just as he began this poem, quite obviously remained to the end a bachelor in his peculiarities and prejudices.

Unnumbered are the forms that slavery takes.
I see a man looking most grave and sensible,
Day after day, and oftener than the day,
With something ugly sticking from his mouth,
A little, crooked, perforated tube,
Six inches long, black and repulsive-looking,
And having a protuberance at the end,
From which a curling quackling fume arises,
Indicative of latent fire within.

The poetic play is a form of art which may easily be, and usually is, a better play than poem. The reason for this is not hard to discover, since it would be difficult indeed, perhaps impossible save for genius, to present a sufficiently fast moving plot, peopled with ordinary folk, in terms of subjective dreaming. Donagh MacDonagh, with *Happy as Larry* (Fridberg, 6s.) may not have succeeded in his double endeavour but has managed to make his verse not only readable but lively as becomes an Irishman. Of the suitability of this work for stage presentation we can say nothing, our business being with its poetic quality only. On that side it can be commended both for its terse sufficiency of wit and for more than an occasional flash of real poetry.

Do not resent the arm that presses
Your widowed waist, its innocence
Is as a veil that shields your beauty
From every light offence;
And if my lips should touch your ear
In whispering a grieving word
Think it no more than if the sky
Caress a widowed bird;

Mr. MacDonagh has certainly contrived to mingle blarney with poetry and, it is quite probable, has written a better poem than play.

Imagination is an overworked word and it is often endowed with a greater importance than it deserves. It is, of course, a quality of the mind and, as such, can play only a preliminary part in creative work. Its effect is to stimulate by its power of reaching out beyond experience and when this power is great it can undoubtedly touch the springs of invention, or creation, as by a self-induced intoxication. Poets may approach their mystery in this way, as well as by the more subjective route, but the goal is more distant so, and harder to attain, and the result in most cases will be verse only, although verse of a distinctly more acceptable sort than the cerebro-literary kind. Doris Burton in *The Incarnation*

(Stockwell) makes this approach, very pleasantly and competently and without self-consciousness. The result is sincerity; and her words serve her deftly and with grace. And yet she, and therefore we, remain unstirred in any real sense by her work. Much the same things may be said justly of *Pilgrim's Leisure*, by A. de M. Chesterman, who sends us his privately printed booklet. His poems are devotional and his emotional content that which is proper to such work. He, too, finds his themes in his head, but treats them sincerely, simply and conpetently, with the result that his verse is a pleasant amalgam of all three. Mr. Albert Haddock also sends us a privately printed book which he is content to call just *Verses*, and here again we find the same unassuming competence of versification whose limitations are due only to the author's failure to penetrate far enough into his own depths. He writes by imaginative impulse, for recreation probably, but does it without egotism or pretentiousness. Much the same sort of thing is true of *How Shall We Remember Them*, by Augustine Rhys (Crowther, 2s. 6d.) except that there is something a little less authentic about it. The over-emphasis, amounting to falsity, of the opening lines

Humble we stand before their shattered lives
Who put to shame our vulgar, blatant pride,

is significant of a less humble approach to his art than is essential. *Gabriel's Hounds*, by S. Matthewman (Books of To-day, 3s. 6d.), another small volume but this time composed of one long poem, is a stark narrative, in rhymed couplets, of tragedy, in a sheep-farmer's family on the Yorkshire moors. There is nothing unusual in the story of a discontented daughter leaving home, only to return to her Calvinistic father's house to bear an illegitimate child, but the grim recital is managed so well and with so appropriate an economy of diction that we were carried away by it. Perhaps the narrative also absorbed the author to the point where he cared only for the technical finish of his couplets, for what poetry there is in this story is mainly what we supply ourselves under the influence of our own aroused imaginations. Watch him setting his grim scene in the first few lines:

The heather on the Northern moors
Makes in the autumn purple floors,
And carpets with warm green in Spring
For the delight of wandering.
But, mounting where the heather lies
No longer, all that colour dies
And, stretching out on every hand
The grey bent dominates the land:

This quality is well sustained throughout and the author does not appear to have been troubled by the choice of his strict verse form. Another single poem by Dennis Birch, called *Poem for a Festival*, celebrates Lichfield Cathedral and was written in aid of the Cathedral fund. The price is 1s. and the author has done very well with a difficult subject. Any theme set for a poet, whether by himself or by others, and written about, as it were, to order is difficult, for it must be dealt with mentally. The result may be as polished and beautifully phrased as this, but it will seldom be a poem because of its genesis.

To conclude our survey, we should desire to notice with some pleasure two publications not entirely concerned with poetry but both containing some excellent examples of it. The first is the autumn number of *Meanjin Papers*, published by the Melbourne University Press, and is a most interesting survey of contemporary Australian verse and prose, and we say again that we were impressed by it. The second is *The Mint*, edited by Geoffrey Grigson (Routledge,

8s. 6d.), which describes itself as a miscellany of literature, art and criticism. There is also some poetry, but apparently this is regarded as a form of literature. A pity, for the selection given is distinguished, and if the remaining contents of this book are as good in their class then this volume should be a great success.

From the Oxford University Press we have received *The Background of Modern Poetry*, an inaugural lecture by C. M. Bowra, M.A., D.Litt. (2s.). Packed with erudition as it is, we have no difficulty in recognising in the lecturer an authority on English poetry. His theme could in the main be fairly described as a defence of modern poets and poetry. While we disagree with various assumptions which he makes to support his case, in particular that it is not possible to continue to write fresh and living verse in old forms, and that words are the be-all and end-all of poetry, and further that poets who have indulged in particular forms have done so because to them that was the only sort of poetry worth writing, we nevertheless do not disagree with him in his conclusion, which seems to be that new poetry is now being written and that some of it is worthwhile. We believe Dr. Bowra has omitted from his calculations the fact that humanity is at the moment in a recession in all the arts, and that during these historically recurrent recessions a spirit of defeatism is apt to possess the artist and to produce in him a decadence of spirit which reflects itself inevitably in his creative work. We observe that in one place Dr. Bowra, with some evidence of approval, remarks that if clarity hampers poetry then it should be disregarded; in other words, if people wish to write incoherently that is all right with him. We observe further that in quoting examples of Mr. Dylan Thomas's work he carefully eschews the more blatant examples of this poet's incoherence, probably, of course, because it would have done the argument no good. But no one wishes to deny that Dylan Thomas, and others of his kidney, are poets, although to mention them in the same article as Dryden, Pope and Wordsworth, as though they were of the same hierarchy but a different generation, strikes us as outrageous. X.

CLASSICISM IN MODERN POETRY

'*Four Quartets*' *Rehearsed*, by Raymond Preston (Sheed and Ward, 5s. net) is a useful book for those who find the poems obscure; many difficulties of word and idea are explained, and the subject is treated sympathetically. The book is not, however, true literary criticism but is really a textual crib. It helps us to appreciate the text in the same way as notes on Virgil in a schoolbook, but it offers no real guide to appreciation of the poetry itself. On the other hand the author makes very modest claims for his work, fully realising the limitations of his approach; and the resulting product is, as far as it goes, successful. Whether the object which the book fulfils is really worthwhile, is extremely doubtful. There is very little to be gained from a painful analysis of T. S. Eliot's technique when the crying need of the moment is to place his position in relationship to the poets of the past and to place his poetry in relationship with past poetry.

There is a common tendency today to regard Eliot's work as something completely detatched from the past both in form and content, a monstrous outcrop of rock with independent and newly built foundations. Nothing could be more erroneous. The form is certainly new in a sense, but its development can be traced by stages through Yeats and Hopkins back to Milton, and earlier still, to Donne. Eliot's vers libre is usually criticised for its formlessness, but this, again, is an extraordinarily superficial view. On closer inspection the impression

gained is one of rigid discipline of rhythm and phrase, a sometimes pedantic insistence on the precise meaning of words, and a brittle terseness and concentration of imagery, all of which is the very reverse of free. The content is usually intellectual and never spontaneously emotional; such emotions as there are are always derived from intellectual premises and have little energy of their own. These qualities are inherently those of classical poetry, where the approach is predominantly intellectual and objective, in contrast to the largely emotional and subjective approach of the Romantics. Even when Eliot is most concerned with portraying subjective experience, he is completely objective and detatched. The truth of the matter is, of course, that Eliot has more affinity with Milton than he has with his immediate predecessors. This is a new type and school of classicism.

Eliot is no poet of the impassioned utterance and the lyrical climax; he is a poet of controlled rise and fall, a dry, objective, intelligent observer, often humorous, never directly personal. His view of reality is reached through the intellect; from the intellectual hypothesis gained comes a complicated emotional state, a refined by-product not without peculiar charm. Contrast this creative progress with that of Rilke, one of the greatest of all poets in the last forty years, and we shall see exactly the opposite at work. For Rilke, reality was sensuously and in intuitively perceived, the very act of perception born of a rich, though rarified emotional force; the intellectual faculty is always subordinate to the emotional, and comes into play only when the spiritual conclusion is reached. Let us take two examples, the first from T. S. Eliot:

> . . . But to apprehend
> The point of intersection of the timeless
> With time, is an occupation for the saint—
> No occupation either, but something given
> And taken, in a lifetime's death and love,
> Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender.
> For most of us, there is only the unattended
> Moment, the moment in and out of time,
> The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight,
> The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning
> Or the waterfall, or music heard so deeply
> That it is not heard at all, but you are the music
> While the music lasts. These are only hints and guesses,
> Hints followed by guesses; and the rest
> Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action.
>
> (from "The Dry Salvages" part 5)

and contrast it with an extract from Rilke:

> Voices, voices. Hear, O my heart, as only
> saints have heard: heard till the giant-call
> lifted them off the ground; yet they went impossibly
> on with their kneeling, in undistracted attention:
> so inherently hearers. Not that you could endure
> the voice of God—far from it. But hark to the suspiration,
> the uninterrupted news that grows out of silence.
>
> (Translation by J. B. Leishman and Stephen Spender)
>
> Stimmen, Stimmen. Höre, mein Herz, wie sonst nur
> Heilige hörten: dass sie der riesige Ruf
> aufhob vom Boden; sie aber knieten

Unmögliche, weiter und achteten's nicht:
So waren sie hörend. Nicht dass du Gottes ertrügest
die Stimme, bei weitem. Aber das Wehende höre,
die ununterbrochene Nachricht, die aus Stille sich bildet.

(From the first Duino Elegy)

In the first extract, Eliot says that ecstasy is possible only for the saint; then follows a lovely description of the experience that we, as ordinary mortals, can hope to feel; and he ends with the conclusion that this experience is incomplete. This clearly shows Eliot's limitations: he cannot enter into experience itself—that is an occupation for the saint—and even when he tries to describe the emotional state that follows, he cannot help being objective and impersonal. For Eliot not the rest, but almost the whole, is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action. Rilke, on the other hand, bids his heart hear as only saints have heard—that is to say that he himself must live in spiritual exaltation. True, he remarks, we cannot bear to face God ourselves, but at least we can try, and listen to the silence. With Rilke the experience is lived and felt, and the intellect is not permitted to keep the imagination in check. The fault of the living, said Rilke, is that they make too sharp distinctions (-Aber Lebendige machen alle den Fehler, dass sie zu stark unterscheiden).

The impact of Eliot's poetry on the younger poets has been immense. Not understanding the meaning of his apparent freedom of form, they have gone to artificial and ill-sounding excesses. Poetry has become atrophied and dried up—the modern equivalents of the faun and the satyr are the marxist and the psychologist—and there is no spontaneity and little beauty. This might seem to bode ill for the future, but fortunately the answer is already beginning to make itself apparent, and a new Romanticism is arising. This Romanticism is personal but above all spiritual, sensual yet controlled, dispensing with or developing the older forms. True poetry has been described as "something which makes you catch your breath," and this the new poets are trying to achieve. The following example is taken from Laurence Whistler's "Who live in Unity" (Heinemann, 5s.):

Sometimes when night was pastoral, and they
Were tuned to its vibrato candlelight
As to a low recorder—using words,
Yet hardly noticing the words, so rapt
In the fine harmonies mere thinking made,
Mere thought with thought, like fingered bell with bell,
Blooming and waning, audible tenderness—
A curious notion came. All this exists
In one mind only. Whose? Am I asleep?
Or am I mad, and talking to myself?

This extract, by an established poet, is typical of the new feeling which has come to poetry. The work of Jonathan Wilson in particular, shows a freshness and depth of feeling which are a welcome contrast to the usual intellectual pretentiousness which so often passes for poetry at the present time. Here is an extract from the poem "There shall be no night" (Poems by Jonathan Wilson: Cape, 3s. 6d. net).

'Good-bye,' you said suddenly, 'good-bye :
You must forget me, think me a dream
Dawn has killed and now at day gleam
On without me into day. Good-bye.'

So you wrenched yourself from me leaving
Me silent, all my songs silent all day,
For the tune that was theirs was stolen away
And the notes that were left told no singing.

O how shall I forget? Though you take
The sunlight from my memories, still
I will remember: for we planned and the chill
Afternoon was gilded and the great
Cry of the sun at dawn was for us.
'Forget,' you said: so I went my ways
Remembering to forget and all my days
Were nothing but remembrances.

These poets are using the techniques bequeathed by Eliot and his followers, but they reject the idea that poetry can ever be anything but itself. 'The poetry,' declared Eliot in "East Coker" 'does not matter,' but the new poets believe that this is completely wrong. Morevoer they are certain that poetry is not philosophy or psychology or marxism; it may contain these things within itself, but it is essentially the communication of an emotional state from poet to reader, and as such it must have its own life, its own vision and its own reality.

B.O.A.R. PETER RAILING.

A memorial cairn to the memory of Colonel John M'Crae, the author of *In Flanders Fields*, was dedicated at Geulph, Ontario, on August 5, one day after the anniversary of the beginning of the first World War. In the absence of the Rt. Hon. William Lyon Mackenzie King, Prime Minister of Canada, at the Peace Conference, the ceremony was performed by the Hon. Ian Alistair Mackenzie, M.A., Ll.B. (Edin.), K.C., M.P., Minister of Veteran Affairs in the Canadian Cabinet, who, in his address paid tribute to the "undying fame" of Colonel M'Crae.

"Seldom in the history of mankind", he said, "has a single mortal succeeded in a few short lines in expressing the highest sentiments of a whole people, as did John M'Crae." It was symbolic and appropriate that the three stanzas in which this great Canadian revealed the soul of Canada should have been first published in another country. The words that he spoke had no national limitations. His lines were quoted—and reverently misquoted—as frequently as the greatest passages from Shakespeare, Lincoln, and from Holy Writ itself.

"If ever the words of mortal man were inspired from on high to point the way of human endeavour, then truly was John M'Crae inspired when he inscribed that message from the herioc dead:—

'To you from failing hands we throw
The torch: be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep . . .' "

The Army surgeon who, crouching in a rude dugout, penned those lines under enemy fire, was thinking of a particular situation of the moment. But, so clear was his vision of the significance of the cause for which his comrades were laying down their lives, that he spoke in terms of everlasting truth. The mortal remains of Lieutenant-Colonel John M'Crae lay beneath a cross at Wimereux in France on a sunny slope facing the sunset and the sea, but his challenging message lived on.

Dynamics of American Poetry : CXIV

I shall begin my comment on *Prairie Brand* by Vera Holding by praising the publishers. Bruce Humphries, Inc., Boston, turn out the best looking volumes that come my way.

This book, as it suggests, is by a Prairie girl who loves her prairies and tells well of them. Her sonnets are excellent; *You* follows:

My thoughts are fragrant flowers filled with you.
You are a voice that only I can hear.
You are my star that always glimmers through
Though miles apart—you're always close and dear.
You fling into the chalice of my soul
A glowing flame of light to guide me on
Through tangled ways where life exacts a toll
For each mistake till youth and song are gone.
You are a brace to keep my shoulders straight,
The strong hand in the dark—my candle's gleam—
My cup of strength when sorrow is my fate:
You are to me the best of which I dream.
And if but one of all my dreams come true
My heart shall know it was because of you!

Another of Miss Holding's Sonnets is *Memoriam*:

They are not dead, who rest in peaceful slumber
The long, long sleep beneath the prairie sod,
Nor those whose blood was shed to serve "Old Glory",
A last long sleep whose waking is with God.
Though dust return to dust of wind-swept prairie . . .
Though voices loved the while and lost are stilled,
In gentle winds—in sighing of the willows—
In April rains—in air with bird's song spilled,
They live, and living in our hearts forever
They heal the scar where sorrow long has lain;
As one by one they gather over yonder,
Each life a link that forms a golden chain.

An Oregon Interlude by Anna Holm Pogue (Bruce Humphries) is a narrative poem of some 50 pages; the characters are real, many of the events are actual happenings, and the dealing with the Indians are factual. This history is a lively account of the vivid Lieut. Philip Sheridan, later General, and his U.S. Cavalry troop sent to Oregon to keep the Indians under control.

I am glad to read on the book jacket of *God in Gardens* by E. Leigh Mudge (Bruce Humphries, Inc.) that Mr. Mudge chooses to look at light rather than darkness and to sing songs of hope and cheer rather than dirges. He is a well known Methodist Minister and is the author of several popular psychology text books. Our frequent desires for solitude is expressed very well in *Solitude of the Soul.*

Among the secret places of the soul
There is a chamber where no step approaches.
No friendly wanderer hath here his goal,
Nor sly, unfriendly footstep here encroaches.
Arrogant men this thrice-barred gate would enter;
Devoted friends the doorway would unbar—
The soul apart holds yet this lonely center,

Inhabiting a solitary star.
A seaside copse lies open to the ocean;
A gate swings freely at the garden's end;
A cautious door yields to my friend's devotion—
But this is stayed against my nearest friend.
Here I retire beyond all observation,
Save the unsleeping stars, the moonlit sea,
And, face to face, in silent contemplation,
Meet what I was and am and still may be.

In another vein he writes *Dream of Spring*.

Once on a time, my dear, the world
Was bright with skies of May,
For you were young and I was young,
And age was far away.
A glory like an iris-gleam
Adorned the common day.

How golden was the June, my dear,
How glorious July!
As dewy morning drifts away
Beneath a sunny sky,
And summer proves, though roses fade,
True beauty cannot die.

The cooler autumn winds may blow,
The leaves may fall, my dear;
But life will still be glad for me,
So long as you are near—
My breath of spring, my summer sky,
My living atmosphere!

Born in Vermont, Frances Frost began her career as a reporter, and followed it by becoming instructor in creative poetry in the University of Vermont. It would seem that her pen has never known an idle moment—novels and volumes of poetry are listed among her achievements. From *Mid-Century* (Creative Press) I transcribe *Ancestor*:

My children's children yet shall fly
the furthest pathways of the sky.

My children's children yet shall gaily
embark for Mars or Venus daily.

But before they take to wing and throttle,
they must be nourished from a bottle.

Before they rocket through the sky,
someone will have to keep them dry.

Their bones, before they leave the sod,
must be reinforced by cod.

Before to starry space they go,
they must be zippered from the snow.

My children's children, though they spurn
the earth, will have a lot to learn
of marbles, spitballs, roller skates,
before they find atomic fates,
and learn what love is all about
and several times fall in and out.

My children's children yet shall dance,
and tilt with laughter at mischance,
and learn their sixes and their sevens,
before they navigate the heavens,
and recognize God's grin as such.
My mother's mother knew as much.

There is much echo of war in many of these poems. How could it be otherwise?

This reviewer has invariably found poetry of the Catholic Sisters of significant worth. Sister M. Maura has published many poems in the better magazines and is the author of a sonnet sequence, *Where Once the Wild Arbutus Grew*, commemorating the golden Jubilee of the College of Notre Dame of Maryland, and is continuing her graduate work at the Johns Hopkins University. In *Initiate the Heart* (Macmillan), we pause at the first poem *In Praise of Loneliness*?

There is no trysting place for souls
and I am proud to be
so lonely for your great, kind heart—
this is my dignity.

My words might bruise your whitest thought,
might break some waxen leaf,
might bring your templed loveliness
to sudden, human grief.

This is my praise of loneliness—
whatever wistful years
may come shall find my heart at peace,
too hushed for tears.

which carries with it the reliance of this poet's heart in that which is beyond our ken. In the cloistered loneliness the spirit seems to grow. Is it not a wonder that we who live in the hurly burly of life dare attempt to write poetry?

The Northern Stranger by Lysander Kemp (Random House) is a first book of 41 poems written during Army Service in the Caribbean. Mr. Kemp is a Vermonter who has lived most of his life in Massachusetts. He served three years in the Caribbean Defense Command in Equador and Puerto Rico and was a Sergeant at the time of his discharge. His M.A. degree he received at Boston University in the summer of '46.

A soldier's poem, *Guaracha*, follows:

Bewildered by strange music, the shake
of dark dancers in a strange rhythm,

the dark boy singing his passion out,
Yo te quiero from the big throat
immediately, beyond mistake—
bewildered, uneasy, scratching a thumb,
I saw your sungold hair and tall
beauty and straighter Northern grace
on the wagon-road under the mountain,
on the wide porch, in the daisy-field—
but not here, not twisting in this place;
and suddenly I was sick for home.

In another vein we read a short poem about homegoing.

To know your native place and proper home
(the house on the dunes above the glittering bay),
its tug on your heart, its full felicity, roam
(but remember her sea-streaming, leaning and laughing
as she ran up the tilt of the tawny shore);
and then go back easily, go back simply,
as though you had only walked to the corner store.

The early part of *Wind on New Hills* by Cordray Maxwell (Wings Press) is filled with lyrics, romantic and charming, but it is in the sonnet group I find what I would have you read.

Earth-Dream is an example:

Dream on and do not heed approach of dawn,
For who can tell that suns in mounting bring
Less of a phantom than a night withdrawn.
The dream of day is frail as tissue wing
Of humming birds, blue phosphorus in light,
Their iridescent throats against the blue
In momentary pause upon their flight;
Is not this part of the dream engaging you?
This fantasy—a tale forever told,
Is whirled in feathers flown as nothing worth—
As shaking withered fingers of the old
Who fumble trinket-boxes; but when earth
And the bulky bag of dreams at last is spent,
We find reality and are content.

And one lyric, *Passing Faces*?

Whenever sadness is a weight within me—
And heels that click the street have lonely ring—
I mingle with the crowds that push and scatter
And meet some radiant one whose smile will sing.

Whenever joy is found in passing faces—
A warmth of kindliness in sudden eyes—
The spirit that is caught in this quick passing,
Is that to which my silent heart replies.

Happily for the reader of *Mirrors of Fire* by Bernard D. N. Grebanier (Mosher Press) Mr. Grebanier has much to say about his considered position in regard

to the art of poetry: "I attempted every sort of meter and rhyme and learned to free myself (forever, I hope) from the pursuit of the incomprehensible that dissipates the energies of so many contemporaries." The first 20 pages of this collection are taken up with the story of Pilate and Claudia. Through the volume there are many fine poems. I am drawn to give you a sonnet, midway in the book:

I will renounce this magic and repent
I ever loved you even for a day,
And wrap myself in comfortless content
Like you—learn how, like you, not to obey
The promptings of my blood, how not to hear
My dying heart as it in anguish begs
The love that was its sole sustaining air—
And make my spirit feed itself on dregs
That, proud, disdained all but the heady wine
Of love, once ours, that you away could fling—
And give my mind, like yours, on husks to dine
Which banqueted on feasts to shame a king!
Like you I'll learn to live without a life,
And till I've won, sue numbing Death for wife!

Mr. Grebanier is a professor of English at Brooklyn College, which he describes as too pleasant to be called a job. He lectures here on Shakespeare and Milton—you may add Shelley, Browning and Meredith. He began life intending to be a concert pianist but gave it up when he found how much he enjoyed teaching. Music is now his chief recreation, playing for his friends. The most important thing to him is his poetry. In the last quarter of the book we find translations.

In another mood we find *Banished*:

Once I looked upon the face of God
Daily, when you were with me,
And I knew Heaven well.
But now through hours I plod,
Reliving days no more to be,
And day by day I live this living Hell!

They could not fright me with their talk of fire
Of flaming coals, of Heaven's wrath
Upon us after death.
You went. I know God's ire,
My feet are on that flaming path,
Hell's scorching air I breathe with every breath.

Within my empty home, with vacant stare,
Thinking not and feeling not,
Day by day I sit.
My sluggish veins declare
That this forever is my lot:
This is Hell, nor am I out of it!

In the strength of the example we have given you see the power of this writer.

Having begun my poetic endeavours with a sonnet prize for the best poem on *Manhattan,* I turn immediately to Mr. Ramsaur's *Manhattan at Night*, in

Altars to the Moon by Hugh Wilgus Ramsaur (Wings Press).

Is this a fairy city turned to gold
By some moon-kindled sorcery of night
As tier on tier of galleries alight
Like gardens of lost Babylon, unfold
A dream of phantom beauty. Ah, behold!
What flowerlike wizardry enthralls the sight
Where soon the darkness with its ogre-blight
Must shroud giant skeletons grown dim and old.

Glitter and Gloom and Galaxies that tower
In founts of fantasy to dome the skies
With magic joy; in what far, perilous hour
Will the hid secret of this vision rise
A flaring cenotaph the dark will keep
Eternal in its everlasting sleep!

We read in the foreword to *Outside of Time* by Jean du Bouillier (Downy Press, Santa Barbara, Cal.) that not since this poet's popular "Patterns of Dream" has there been published such a delightful volume of pastoral lyrics as *Outside of Time*. Now, reader, let me tell you where this man dwells. He's in Peyton Hall, Hollywood, Cal., and with the modesty of a man, which is seldom to be found, he writes me "I sincerely hope you may find in my humble attempt to write 'Beauty' in the media of poetry something you enjoy reading." To begin with, no poet should speak like that. We have no choice and if he had said, "I will shoot you if you don't like these poems" it would suit me better. After all, don't you know that Mickey Mouse is the greatest man in America? If you don't have fun, you don't have anything, these days.

Jorge Carrera Andrade is Equadorian and seems to have gathered much publicity in his life. It is said that Miss Muna Lee's translations of his *Secret Country* (MacMillans) are "exceptionally good and very beautiful" but is it not true that much of the music is lost in translation? And I have made it a rule not to review translations. The English language and English poetry are enough for me.

Robinson Jeffers writes me from Tor House, Carmel, California, apropos my reactions to his verse drama: "Thank you for your letter about "Medea," which I have stupidly failed to answer sooner. I look forward with pleasure to seeing your six poetic dramas when the book comes out—certainly I am not alone in that. And also to your possible visit to Carmel. This is still a beautiful place, though the population increases shockingly during and since the war. As to "Medea," it was more or less written to order, for a producer and a fine actress. I never before thought of writing for the stage, and don't expect to do so again, but it was interesting. Pretty far from Euripides; at least I retained his scenario and characters while omitting some absurdities. Not even the Greeks were perfect."

I opened *Poet Physicians*, an anthology of Medical Poetry written by Physicians, compiled by Mary Lou McDonough (Chas. C. Thomas, Springfield, Ill.) with zest, since my earliest days have been spent in the company of the best American physicians, one of whom I married, Dr. Wm. Allen Bartlett, in 1893. On our

breakfast table the waitress, who was invariably "a green horn", was ordered always to place—even should she forget the coffee and the eggs—Swinburne's poems, Poe's poems and Kipling's. It was not long before my predisposition toward poetry infected Dr. Bartlett, and no one has read to me these poets better than Dr. Bartlett.

This book is very well introduced by words of Robert Louis Stevenson:

> "There are men and classes of men that stand above the common herd: the soldier, sailor and shepherd; not infrequently the artist, rarer still, the clergyman; the physician almost as a rule.
>
> "He is the flower (such as it is) of our civilization; and when that page of man is done with, and only to be marvelled at in history, he will be thought to have shared as little as any in the defects of the period, and most notably exhibited the virtues of the race.
>
> "Generosity, he had, such as is possible to those who practice an art, never to those who drive a trade; discretion tested by a hundred secrets; tact tried in a thousand embarrassments, and what is more important, Herculean cheerfulness and courage. So it is that he brings air and cheer into the sick room, and often enough, though not so often as he wishes, brings healing."

but, oh my! the list of poets shows scarcely an Anglo Saxon name. Out of the many pages of this book I am quoting *Complaint.*

They call me and I go.
It is a frozen road
past midnight, a dust
of snow caught
in the rigid wheeltracks.
The door opens.
I smile, enter and
shake off the cold.
Here is a great woman
on her side in the bed.

She is sick,
perhaps vomiting,
perhaps laboring
to give birth to
a tenth child. Joy! Joy!
Night is a room
darkened for lovers,
through the jalousies the sun
has sent one gold needle!
I pick the hair from her eyes
and watch her misery
with compassion.

and *The New Year.*

As children lost and wandering
In a wood take steps in circles
In vain attempt to find their home,
So time appears again today
On this elliptic path through space,
Persistent in the annual search
For life's controlling foci—Death and Birth.

But after all poetry is still poetry and I remember the music of Swinburne.

ALICE HUNT BARTLETT.

Lot 13 at a recent sale of mediæval mss. at Sotheby's was the collection of Troubadour songs, written in Italy *c.* 1355, known to Provencal scholars as manuscript N, and studied as long ago as the sixteenth century by Mario Equicola and Cardinal Pietro Bembo. Though its initials contained portraits of the troubadours and its margins some 70 illustrations, its subject matter was responsible for its fetching £7,500, the highest price in the sale.

Shakespearian Emendations—No. 3

In *As You Like It*, Act 1, Scene 1, Charles, the duke's wrestler, informs Oliver (according to the First Folio):

> I am given sir secretly to understand, that your
> yonger brother Orlando hath a disposition to come
> in disguis'd against mee to try a fall: To-morrow
> sir I wrastle for my credit, and hee that escapes me
> without *some broken limbe* shall acquit him well:

upon which, Oliver persuades him to injure Orlando; to which he replies:

> I am heartily glad I came hither to you: If hee
> come to-morrow, Ile give him his payment: if ever
> hee *goe alone* againe Ile never wrastle for prize
> more: And so, God keepe your worship.

General acceptance of "if ever he go alone again" in the above passage, appears to be accorded, but the "New Shakespeare" (1926) edition of the play states "by 'go alone' Charles meant 'walk without a crutch'". If that were true, and a cripple was asked, "Were you alone?" and he replied, "No, I had my crutch with me", he would be telling the truth! And, similarly, Crusoe, on his island, was not alone while he carried his gun! The fact that the "New Shakespeare" could offer no better explanation of the phrase than that, proves it to be a corruption, and clears the way for my emendation, which is that Shakespeare wrote "whole"; "alone" being a First Folio error.

Had "alone" been correct, Charles' bluster meant that the person who wrestled with him would never be able to move afterwards without someone else's assistance; but a broken arm would not prevent a person walking or running, and Charles had said he intended to inflict "some broken limb", which is tantamount to saying that, providing he broke a limb, he did not care whether it was *an arm* or a leg, and after *that* it cannot be entertained that he used the word "alone".

Having proved that the poet did not write "alone", I submit "whole" to be the only feasible alternative, and here are two Shakespearian quotations which appear to clinch the matter:

> Let them keep their limbs whole.
> (*Merry Wives of Windsor*, Act 3, Scene 1)
> Yet all goes well, yet all our joints are whole.
> (1st part *Henry IV*, Act 4, Scene 1)

It was exceptionally easy for "alone" to have been substituted for "whole" in one of the numerous transcriptions of the play which must have been made for the actors' use during the twenty years before it was printed; for superimpose the one word on the other:

WHOLE
ALONE

Each word has five letters. When penned, no letter in either word has a tail; the tall letter "h" has a tall letter, "l", under it; the letters l, o and e are in each word and the one "o" and "e" is under the other. In the early part of the seventeenth century all writing was done with quill pens, so was not as legible as is present-day writing.

I submit I have shown the necessity for the emendation.

In Act 1, Scene 2, Rosalind and Celia entreat Orlando not to wrestle with Charles, who has just severely injured three other men, and he replies:

> I beseech you, punish mee not with your
> harde thoughts, wherein I confesse me
> much guiltie to denie so faire and ex-
> cellent Ladies anie thing. But let your
> faire eyes and gentle wishes go with mee
> to my triall; wherein if I bee foil'd,
> there is but one sham'd that was never
> gracious: If kil'd, but one dead that is
> willing to be so: I shall do my friends
> no wrong, for I have none to lament me:
> the world no injurie, for in it I have
> nothing: onely in the world I fil up
> a place, which may bee better supplied,
> when I have made it emptie.

This fine speech shows Orlando to have been as skilful in pleading as he was in wrestling: it is difficult to imagine an oration more potent to obtain a woman's sympathy.

Early commentators could not see how Orlando could confess in the *ladies'* thoughts, so, as mentioned by Charles Knight, they suggested that "wherein" is a misprint for "herein", but as they did so merely because the easiest way to dispose of the enigmatical "wherein" was to behead it, and as they failed to justify the decapitation, posterity has abandoned their idea, as shown by Knight himself, and by the "New Shakespeare", which latter brings the subject up to 1926.

Knight said "wherein" means "because". In that case, Orlando asked not to be punished *because* he was guilty (as he admitted). But that will not do, for, by the same rule of inversion, a person would be punishable for being innocent! Moreover, "because" cannot be considered an acceptable synonym to "wherein", and the like applies to the "New Shakespeare's" "though", which is given ("wherein", i.e., though) as if its mere production settled the matter notwithstanding that the one word has no affinity with the other.

The ancient emendators were right: Shakespeare wrote "herein", but they failed to notice that his punctuation had been changed. I submit he pointed as follows:

> I beseech you, punish mee not with your hard
> thoughts herein. I confesse me much guiltie to
> denie so faire and excellent Ladies anie thing,
> but let your faire eies and gentle wishes go
> with me to my triall:

"herein" refers to his determination to wrestle; "but" means "nevertheless". The remainder of the speech is a list of the points which he considers justify him in asking the ladies for the favour of their good wishes.

There are many examples of similar uses of "herein" to be found in the plays, but I pick out three for quotation, for, as in the case we are considering, in each of them, the word is used in connection with thoughts and finishes the sentence. They are: *As You Like It*, 1, 1, 146, "I had myself notice of my brother's purpose herein". *Richard 2nd*, 4, 327, "Before I freely speak my mind herein". *Richard 3rd*. 3, 4, 7, "Who knows the lord protector's mind herein?" Nowhere in the plays is "herein" used other than in a sense cognate to that in the above examples.

Part of the speech runs "go with mee to my triall; *wherein* if I bee foil'd, there is but one sham'd that was never gracious": "wherein" here means " '*in which*'

if I be foil'd", etc. As Shakespeare used the word in its true sense here, it cannot be supposed he had twisted it from its proper meaning only three lines previously; hence it is obvious he did not then write "wherein" but "herein", and readers of "The History of the First Folio", in the June POETRY REVIEW, will know this printers' error to be only one of many thousands.

HOWARD PARSONS.

The 1946 Shirley Carter Leigh Greenwood Poem Competition: Report and Award

Fewer poems were submitted for the Greenwood Competition this year, and of these some twenty were in the running for the award, standing out from the rest because they had shape, originality of image and phrasing, and technical dexterity.

The winning poem is "PLOUGHING", by PHOEBE HESKETH. This poem, in musical and well-managed pentameters, has poetic feeling, unity, and exact choice of image and vocabulary, and, though the influence of Victoria Sackville-West and Herbert Palmer is heard faintly in the background, the poem is original and individual.

Second I place "Summer on the River", by Marguerite Tudor Williams. This poem, brilliantly successful in its evocation of a scene and a mood, is not as original as the winning poem in theme or treatment of theme: it derives from, among others, Gray's "Elegy" and Matthew Arnold.

Third I place "Tiff", by John Sibly. The theme is striking and well developed and the rhythm is exciting, but the phrasing is too exuberant and the beginning too Hopkinesque.

Other poems that stand out and suggest that their writers have in them poetical powers are these: "The Bowl of Spikenard", by Geraldine Kalka Cash, an uneven and lush rendering of the story of St. John Baptist and Mary Magdalene, with, at its best, fine pictorial power:

> "For Joy bounds racing back into the world
> And Sin's proud banners in defeat are furled";

"The Singing Seasons", by Wilfred Henry Bartlett, a traditional and beautiful poem descriptive of each of the four seasons, a little too conventional and hackneyed in theme but redeemed by excellence of phrasing and aptness of epithet:

> "Stiff streams dissolve in drunken glee,
> Stringing their music carelessly
> Through valleys cowled with Winter's frown
> And loth to shed their sombre gown
> For the gay, sunlit silk of green
> In which earth's myriad hills are seen";

"Stones", by Arthur W. Ball, which begins excellently,

> "Down topples the slender pinnacle of prayer
> In the dust of grinding death",

but which declines later; and "Scorpio Scorpioni", by T. W. Ramsey, a poem with many beautiful stanzas,

> "The jaguar's eye that sees in dark
> The spiral scale-ascending lark

The winter pyramid of snow
.Burned with the ether-questing spark",

but rather too recondite for those who are not so well versed in the symbolism of astrology as the poet.

Among other poems not as good as the preceding ones but pleasing for one dexterity or another are these: "In the House of the Red Branch", by A. V. Stuart, the chess-playing scene from the Irish legend of Deirdre and Naisi, with a universal application (as has much of the best poetry):

"But this is the story's most tragic centre:
There is a moment, a poised, still moment,
Ere the life slips to annihilation,
The lovely thing slides to its certain destruction;
Beauty of love and beauty of lovers
Hangs in that moment of equilibrium
Between warm delight and the imminent doom";

"East Lothian, The Summer Swallow", by Deric Bolton, with some beautiful description of scenery but marred by obscurity and artificiality of phrasing in many places; "The Fisherman", by Eric Swift, an original poem but with frequent crudities:

"I want to swim upstream with the patterned perch,
See the gold lily-cups from beneath them;
I want to bark with the October hart in the bracken,
Sit so still the cream-bellied stoat will not heed me";

"The Question—A Dream of Assisi", by M. E. J. Hughes, a poem imbued with the influence of William Morris, sincere in its devotion and symbolism, but rather conventional in its phrasing; "The Sisters", by Katharine Winifred Wild, a work of fancy rather than imagination, original in theme but long-winded and with an adventitious bomb as a climax; "The Voyage", by Daphne M. Williams, vivid in imagery but lacking emotional drive, unity, and diversity of pattern:

"Now, like the crocodile whose scaly back
Is green beneath the sluggish river-bed,
Or like green slime, the water churns and boils,
Mixing a colour like the stinking mud
Where lurks the dreaded alligator. Hills
Spring suddenly to view, whose rocky peaks,
All ridged and prickled with exotic trees,
Recall the rugged slopes of some old tor
That sleeps within the garden of the West";

and two poems, "Lazarus", by B. R. Gibbs, and "The Atom", by Alan Dane, in both of which the interpolated lyrics are greatly superior to the rest of the poem.

Entries were received from many parts of the world—England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Germany (B.A.O.R.), Canada, U.S.A., British Guiana, India and New Zealand. Such is the far-flung fame of the Greenwood competition!

On the whole, the long poems, averaging two hundred lines, were superior to the short lyrical poems. It may be pointed out that a strongly-felt emotion, for example gratitude for recovery from illness, is not enough to make a poem: there must be a shaping intelligence behind the emotion. In an endeavour to find a subject that would furnish matter for a long poem many competitors went to Biblical or classical themes; they wrote about Judith, Noah, Naaman, Elijah, Samson, Judas, Lazarus, St. Paul, and Orpheus. They did not realise that a poem

does not choose its subject but a compelling subject dictates a poem. In treatment of Biblical themes they applied modern psychology to interpret, sometimes incongruously, the minds of the ancients. In addition, they tended to be didactic, forgetting Flecker's dictum, "It is not the business of poetry to save man's soul, but to make it worth saving".

Much blank verse and much free verse were submitted. Good blank verse gives the appearance of ease but is very difficult to write. Much of the blank verse sent in was lifeless and flaccid.

> "The Boston Company United Fruit
> Conferring a conclusive benison
> For shipment of bananas from a port
> Linked by a net of railways with its farms."

This was the nadir of the blank verse received. As for free verse, some competitors thought that if prose was chopped up into lines it became verse.

Other faults that eliminated many entries were stale poetical vocabulary, platitudinous thoughts, and shapeless versification—lines without beat and of any length but with inevitable rhyme.

The following further entries had merits of one kind or another—"For a Great Nature-Lover", by G. M. Haines; "Universal Theme and Variations", by Gladys Hunkin; "The Well", by Muriel Spark; "Apologia", by Henry B. Raynor; "Funchal Wine Shop',, by D. L. Allsop; "The Trees of Righteousness", by Arthur F. Nickels; "The Interpreters", by "Helwise Brand"; "Festival", by John T. Kirk; "The House of Fear", by Thomas Morgan McGurk; "For My Lost Love", by Alice Lunt; "Sea Lover's Rhapsody", by G. R. Harvey; "Naaman", by Matilda Snow; "Island of Peace", by Dallas Kenmare; "Eskdale", by C. E. J. Fryer; "Judith", by John J. Pinto; "The Hart',, by Thomas Demarden Williams; "Thomas and the Sparrow", by Ian Serraillier; "Darkness", by Ian Watts; "Elijah", by W. V. Wall; "In the High Summer", by Lois Lamplugh; "Men Still Build Gardens", by Phyllis Hastings; "Orpheus and Eurydice", by Ernest C. Toye; "Early Harvest", by John Kennedy; "The Pilgrims' Way", by J. S. Blanford; "Moths", by Elizabeth J. H. Austen; "When I See You", by "L. L. P. Seal"; "The First Mariner", by Greta Briggs; "The Death of Petronius Arbiter", by Desmond Stewart; "Greenwich", by E. S. Wood; "Letter to Y Platoon", by W. K. Cruickshank; "Gadara, A.D. 31", by Beryl M. Davies; "Noah 1945", by Frances Pritchard; "Frontiers of Peace", by Rita Peck; "The Legend of Gold", by Finola Howe; "The Mere", by M. J. Martyn; "Song of Youth", by Vivien Bulkley; and "Take Post", by "G. (T.)".

(This year's award and comments have been made by MAURICE WOLLMAN, the editor and compiler of *Modern Poetry* 1922-34 (Macmillan) and *Poems of Twenty Years* 1918-38 (Macmillan), who has another similar modern anthology about to go to press.)

Mr. Bayley G. Akroyd, in his short letter in THE POETRY REVIEW seems to have made a very common error. I trust that I am not "out of bounds" by suggesting that for "jazz" Mr. Akroyd really meant "dance music" (popular) or "swing"? Many people loosely place these abominations under the heading of "jazz". Jazz is a type of music which is now almost extinct (I pray that its affinity with poetry does not include this, also, but fear it may) and is as near to poetry as *any* music, in that it is spontaneous and inspired and comes straight from the emotions. I might add that, in common with Mr. Akroyd, I appreciate "poetry as opposed to the fads of the between-the-war era".

Romford. THOS. ASTORE.

MORE THAN ONE ROBIN

In the November-December, 1945, POETRY REVIEW, Aneurin Rhys has aptly illustrated a perennial critical weakness. To Rhys, one inspirited phrase, branded "original" or "unique", makes poetry. How utterly absurd. Someone has remarked that it takes more than one robin to make a spring. May I add that it takes more than robins.

If the position of Rhys be true, we may say that this originally whittled peg makes the temple; this "unique" dab of colour the painting, this chiselled line, the bust. Face to face and grinning at us, however, is that dominating characteristic of simplicity of the masters: no fuss, no strain, no syncopation in blues, no trapese acrobatics to gain attention, no obvious artificiality.

"The rest is silence." What a soul-stirring line when one realises, perhaps subconsciously, that here is the end-all toward which the tragedy has been driving with stark inevitability, and how completely lacking in Rhysesqueness. Or should I say Jonesesqueness? So simple and so direct that the groceryman on the corner might have said the line—emotion reduced to tranquility: no originality in word selectivity, word placement or phrase-building and without connotation meaningless.

Poetry may have inspirited phrases, but how inadequate without an inspirited whole; and how often the inspirited whole is built on line after line of drab uninspirited words until the whole suddenly makes its impact. Quietly it speaks; so quietly in fact that we, in this hurly-burly life, tend to pass over it entirely or quite by accident realise that here it is—a word-picture of the unsayable, a delving in the beyond the beyond, a plastic shaping of truth by a far-seer who converses with the mystics and gives us the most adequate vision that poor creeping mortals can possibly have.

Simple little naive words that never before have met and kissed or grimaced under just these circumstances in relation to the whole, and yet it is the obvious invisible formula of poetry, fresh from the stratosphere of seeing. Analyse it forever and you will never find the "why". There is no "originality" in (1) vocabulary, (2) phraseological matter, (3) rime or rhythm, (4) motif—idea; yet as these ordinary words and phrases rub shoulders, truth and beauty and feeling appear in all their power and sublime majesty, and a small voice whispers to the secondary discoverer, "This is it. See, the obscurity of life pales".

I am not interested in "honeyed hooey" or "mud lace on burst bombs" or even in "gluts" as such. Are the neighbouring words working? What are they doing or saying or painting? Is the aggregate a beacon flash? How do the composite lines shine and on what? What push-button in my mind did they touch? What tiny electric bell did they start on its eternity of ringing? Do not startle or confound me with epithets. Startle me with second-sight; startle me with naked truth; overwhelm me with beauty. Do not dissemble in nonsense: tie a few simple words and lines together; give them your clarity of vision—your superior understanding and light and let the inevitable happen. Thus, you will take my palsied, unsure hand, and will lead me, the poor blind dimwit, to the promontory; where, in the bright flare of your supercharged word-bursts, you will actually outline new horizons. But I shall be too full of emotional realization and appreciation of the vastness of your mind-picture to be able to say "Thank you for this gift—poetry".

As the monkey's prehensile tail curls about the bars of its cage, we tail-grasp a thousand whys and wherefores and all of them, standing alone, false—keeping

us forever in a cage of dogma, frustration and failure. Still we babble, beat tom-toms, advertise on local billboards and chatter our little inanities and futilities.

Take the painting apart: What have you? A pile of drab innocent colours. Take the poem apart and it is a pile of innocent little words. Hire or enslave a million persons to reassemble the colours or the words and they shall fail: yet through those drab colours the Mona Lisa smiled and through those inane words the "solitary reaper" sang. Each in relation to each and all may be termed the magic formula of genius.

Phosphor Mallam has said: "Conscious selection and arrangement of material in accordance with an inner principle and standard of beauty distinguish the beauties of art from those of nature, and from the so-called beauties of skill that do not gratify the aesthetic sense but rather our taste for machinery". And again, "Art occasionally *degenerates into artifice, which sets up its own narrow by-laws as the laws of the realm,* and wields a little tyranny, until successfully appealed against by genius".

May I take another step paralleling Rhys' word- or phrase-festival in originality? Let us consider isolated human beings in the same manner: the most startlingly original acts and phraseology are perpetrated by the maundering idiots and the insane. During this "scientific" preatomic era just closed, how often have the laurels of contemporaneous art gone to the "touched"; need I mention Ezra Pound? But what about that seemingly stolid liver-within-himself? Such was Carlyle, Emerson, Thoreau, Wordsworth, Milton and, in a sense, Dr. Johnson. You prick him and he speaks, and the apish grinning world pauses, blinks and arises from boredom. Words pile on words, phrases on phrases—cumbersome, heavy perhaps, a veritable maudlin resurgance of a man with something to say; all simple, silly, meaningless in themselves until at last, we who pity this clumsy yokel are blinded by his flare of total meaning, total understanding, total seeing. Startling word-tricks to capture our attention much as the lead-writer of advertising copy? Never. He is a nobleman with no such paltry ambition as he struggles to portray the picture in his mind. He is a seer, a thinker who begins to talk and quite secondarily and perhaps accidentally opens the door of his study an inch or so, permitting us to gaze, but a moment, into its semi-obscurity.

As a test of poetry, "uneasy glass" and "swimming flesh chinaed in empty water" will not do. "To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow", "They also serve who only stand and wait", "To be, or not to be", "his eyes were with his heart and that was far away", "We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep", "The still sad music of humanity", "And I have felt a presence", "Beauty is truth, truth beauty", "Our little systems have their day", "His little nameless unremembered acts", "Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass stains the white radiance of Eternity" and on and on I might go: no devices, no word-artifice or phrase-gymnastic; however, even these superbly poetic passages do not "make a poem".

It is so simple: toss words in their fitting form; look before and after; see through man in all his foolishness and greatness; realize total effect without thinking it, with all of its ramifications and connotations; make the content timeless and universal and perhaps you have built the monument, poetry. That's all there is to it; that and the fact that you must be a genius. I have maintained that none of the masters just quoted strained for originality in phrase; if and when it occurs it is merely a descriptive accident of genius exhibiting the pheno-

menon expression or communication, and invariably it is as much a part of the man as his right arm.

Artificial originality is easy: I might say, "The clotting clouds dripped horizon-sunset red" or "The wind permanented the pine's lawnlike hair". But what have I accomplished? Furthermore, one may well ask, "Why does wind '*wince* through bracken' "? Why not "rocket through"? Why not "tells risque stories through"? Why "cautious moon"? Our American moon is a bold, self-assured hussy who comes staring—or peeking, willy nilly. Even the Greeks saw nothing particularly cautious about their huntress. If one is accustomed to the moon, as I'm afraid that Rhys isn't, it seems to infiltrate one's being even more insistently then the sun.

Goethe said, "No one dreams that the true power of a poem consists in the situation—in the theme. Dilettanti, and especially women have very weak ideas in poetry. They usually think, if they could get quit of the technical part, they would have the essential, but they are much mistaken". This is equally true whether the technical element under consideration be theme, rime, rhythm, words, phrases, images or whatnot. Probably our hugest contemporaneous absurdity lies in the fact that most modernists villify technique, yet on the other hand no group of poets in the history of English literature has been so married to the technique of the "original", the "startling", the "disturbing" image or phrase. This technical insistence forces an artificiality in technique more vapid and more ridiculous than the Victorian at his worst. In fact such hybrid poetry must of necessity become vastly more artificial than the "artificial French forms".

Great poetry shouts aloud, "The poem is the man". As the wind rushing through the trees plays its particular tune that no other wind or trees could possibly play, the poetic idea struggles through the poetic mind and emerges a mirror and sounding board disclosing the individual. It could be nothing else, whereas the poem of the inept could be and is everything else.

As I read most modern poetry, traditional or "scientific", I am assailed with sorrow and humility: how crude, ugly and egotistical most of us are.

Calif. CULLEN JONES (Colonel, G.S.C.).

THE INTERPRETATION OF PARADISE LOST

To suggest that fortitude, beauty and courage can convert villainy into heroism, as Mr. Howard Parsons would imply, indicates a confusion of thinking that is unfortunately to-day widespread. It would be to fly in the face of facts to deny that to Satan Milton gave all those personal attributes. Yet villainy is not made of such stuff. Napoleon, we are told, was not unhandsome; and the villain of many a great piece has been endowed with boundless resolution. The late Adolph Hitler could not be described as a coward. Many of the most fearful criminals have been blessed with courage, beauty and brains, none of these being in any way connected with either virtue or villainy. However, wickedness in the beautiful is vastly more dramatic than sin in the ugly. Had Milton set out with a Satan already besotted with sin, repulsive and horrible and had his readers never been disturbed into a sneaking sympathy with his vast rebellion, the potent dramatic quality of the relation would have been largely lost: but this small sympathy does not make Satan a hero. Humanity will ever shelter the hunted. It is in the nature of man.

The suggestion that Adam was a victim merely because the wrath of both

conflicting elements fell upon him actuates this lack of appreciation of the exact qualities of virtue and villainy. The hero Adam evolves with the tragic but humble acceptance of disaster coupled with the resolution to alleviate with what lay in his diminished power the effects of his wife's folly. A victim becomes a hero when desperation becomes hope. No one was more quick to realise this than Milton whose experience had taught and inflamed a hope that made suffering a triviality. His sonnet on his blindness shows an exactly similar heroism to Adam's resolve to serve his Maker with what remained from his decline. The greater this resolve, the more unpromising the circumstance by so much is the hero more heroic. In this aspect Satan is almost devoid of true heroism. The extent of his resolution is only to continue a fall once started until such time as he had plumbed the very depths. His views on what endeavours he would then make towards further degradation Milton does not tell us nor are we likely to know.

I regret that the confusion of thinking into which Mr. Howard Parsons appears to have fallen leads him to suggest that a good result may arise from envy. Envy has never yet induced any man to do aught save destroy. Yes; envy is pained at seeing what another has. The extent of this pain is very evident to anyone viewing the ruins in which many great cities of this world lie. There is no virtue in destruction. The envy that leads man to work and improve is not envy at all. It is ambition.

Referring to what I wrote of Milton's heaven, I think Mr. Howard Parsons has mistaken my meaning, unless he really is revolted by the mention of a rare but comforting beverage. If this latter is the case I am sorry I injured his sensitivity: but I am accustomed to the robust. In Milton's time there existed a traditional heaven. It was made of gold with the exception of the gates which were constructed of pearl. The inhabitants were given to harping. It is folly to sneer at this heaven. It is solely an artistic and highly artificial interpretation of what cannot possibly be conceived in the mind of man—perfect happiness. Milton, along with all the poets of his day adhered very closely to this traditional idea. For those who wish to find a better heaven I would refer to St. Paul: "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard nor hath it been revealed to man what God hath prepared hereafter."

London, S.E.24. PROSPER DOWDEN.

POETRY IN SCHOOLS

Nearly a year ago, THE POETRY REVIEW published an article on "Verse-writing in Schools," which was a first-class exposition of the teaching of verse-writing to young children by a young and enthusiastic teacher. As a somewhat older teacher, with eighteen years' experience of the teaching of poetry, I am venturing to supplement Miss Holiday's observations. She dealt with one aspect only of the teaching of poetry, *i.e.*, verse-writing; whereas my general theme is poetry in schools, covering briefly its various aspects.

The teaching of poetry, with the consequent development of poetic appreciation, is a very delicate task, requiring great skill and patience in its treatment. The two essentials are a good teacher and well-chosen poems. The teacher should have a love and enthusiasm for poetry and a power, in presentation, to impart a *feeling* for poetry to his pupils. Therefore, he should be able to read a poem with telling effect, rendering the beauty of its verbal music and revealing its meaning. The poems should be simple and direct, rhythmical, rich in poetic content and within the range of the child's comprehension.

The main aim of every poetry lesson should be the *enjoyment* of the poem concerned. Hence, poems must be very carefully chosen. If the main aim of the lesson is achieved, the child will gradually realise that poetry gives joy and he will consequently grow to love it.

Every child possesses an innate love of rhythm—it governs our lives—and the teacher must use this as an aid to the appreciation of poetry. So, in the earlier stages of studying poetry, a child should be given poems with a lively rhythm, starting with nursery rhymes (like "Dapple-grey," which is a beautifully wrought little poem), proceeding by way of simple lyric and story poems and ballads to more advanced work, yet all as rich in poetry as possible. Thus, interspersed with ballads may be given narrative poems with plenty of action (like "The Inchcape Rock" or "Bishop Hatto and the Rats"), short nature poems (like "The Voice of Nature" by Mary Howitt, "Rich Days" by W. H. Davies, "Little Trotty Wagtail" by John Clare, or "Daisies" by Frank Dempster Sherman), poems about things, incidents and experiences in which the children are interested (like "The Windmill" by Longfellow, "My Shadow," "The Land of Story-books," "Winter-time," and other poems from "A Child's Garden of Verses" by Robert Louis Stevenson), fables, poems of the Christopher Robin type (some of which have been set to music and could be learnt as songs) and some of the many children's poems which have been written by Walter de la Mare. In his reading, the keen teacher must always be on the look out for suitable poems, and great care must be exercised in their selection for appreciation.

The child should be encouraged to read, to recite, to dramatise or, if he wishes, to learn poems. Attractive presentation of poems in class may often stimulate a child's desire to memorise them. He should not be *forced* to learn them, however, for this may cause him to dislike poetry. He should be encouraged to compose his own verses on subjects like "My Dog", "Jack Frost", "The Scarecrow", "When I Grow Old", "The Box of Paints", "If I Had an Aeroplane", "The Caravan", "The Magic Door", "My Garden", "The Zoo", and other themes which may interest him. He should also be encouraged to ask questions and to discuss poems. In all this, the wise teacher should comment as little as possible, but should let the well-chosen poem speak for itself. If, however, there is anything that the child does not understand, the teacher should be ready to explain; but it must be remembered that there are mysteries in poetry which can never be explained. The child should thus grow to love the poetry lesson above all others; and, if the foundations have been well and truly laid, he may continue with more advanced poetry.

By the time the child reaches the age of eleven (or thereabouts), with an ever-widening outlook, he should be ready for more difficult poems and for a more advanced study of them, ever approaching a more critical treatment. Nature poems (like "The Kingfisher" and "Leisure" by W. H. Davies, "The Brook" by Tennyson, "Autumn" by Keats, "Home Thoughts from Abroad" by Browning, and "There is a Hill" by Bridges); poems of longing (like "Sea Fever" by John Masefield, "Days That Have Been" by Davies, "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" by Yeats, and "I Remember" by Hood); lyric poems (like "Nod" and "Silver" and "The Listeners" by Walter de la Mare, "The Reverie of Poor Susan" by Wordsworth, "The Little Ones" and "Joy and Pleasure" by Davies, and "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" by Gray); poems like "If—" by Kipling and "The Happy Warrior" by Wordsworth (but the moral must not be pointed, or the child might think that he is being 'got at', to the detriment of the poetry); and narrative poems (like "The Highwayman" by Alfred Noyes, "He Fell Among

Thieves" by Newbolt, "The Bard" by Gray, "The Revenge" and "The Voyage of Maeldune" by Tennyson, "Dauber" by John Masefield, "The Forsaken Merman" by Arnold, "The Ancient Mariner" by Coleridge, "The Jackdaw of Rheims" by Barham, "Juggling Jerry" by Meredith, "The Ballad of East and West" and "The Explorer" by Kipling) are all suitable for study by children ranging between the ages of eleven and fourteen plus. I know, because I have taken these poems (and many others) with apparent success, judging by the enthusiasm shown by the children. In dealing with such poems, greater attention should be paid to the beautiful language employed, to the careful and inspired use of words, imagery and ideas. Reading, recitation and verse composition should still be encouraged.

In order that the child may gain a greater understanding of the *art* of poetry and, consequently, a greater appreciation of poetry and its technique, at this stage he should have some lessons on the use of poetic devices such as similes, metaphors, alliteration, assonance and onomatopoeia, with the best possible examples of each. Let the child compose his own examples of these, thereby learning and remembering through actual practice. He must be made to realise, however, that poetry is not just a collection of poetic devices; and that, though these poetic devices are an adornment of it, poetry is something which transcends all these. In this way, the child should arrive at an appreciation of fine poetry and should possess a good background for the study of more mature work.

Hence, we see that the aim of teaching poetry in schools is to lead the child to enjoy and, therefore, to love poetry—so to realise "a clearer, deeper sense of the best in poetry" and its never-failing power as an inspiration and a joy.

Newport, Mon. LAWRENCE W. HOCKEY.

BYRON NOW

Mr. Bebbington's essay in the April-May issue is one of the most refreshing things that has appeared for years in the POETRY REVIEW. I agree with almost every word of it and only wish to add a few notes in support. It is like a strong gust of wind in the stuffy atmosphere of a room in a shoddy warehouse, where nothing but modern poetry has been discussed since 1919. At last a window opens and genius enters.

I would not exchange one canto of "Don Juan" for all the poetry that has been written in the twentieth century. Mr. Bebbington says, "After Shakespeare, Byron is the most discussed of our poets; the one for his poetry and the other on account of his life". Is this quite correct? True, if the discussion is among women, the life only is of interest, because of its supposed wickedness. This wickedness, by the way, is largely fiction. Whenever men meet to discuss art the great poems come under review: "Paradise Lost", "Lycidas", Adonais", and surely "Don Juan".

When the name "Don Juan" is mentioned, there is a lifting of the heaviness of the atmosphere, because of the gaiety and abandon of this unrivalled masterpiece. Men smile with pleasure at the recollection of entertainment and how good this is. The reason Byron has been on the shelf so long is because of the widespread conspiracy against him. As Mr. Bebbington says, "Victorian England had other things to do than read 'Childe Harold' or 'Don Juan'." They had, they were making England the workshop of the world for a few decades, God help us! ! Let us not forget, either, that there have been five generations of Podsnaps, Gradgrinds and Bounderley's between Byron and our own times. Also

it must be remembered that the Universities were in the conspiracy along with Mr. Podsnap. It is forty years since the late Lord Morley, as Chancellor of Victoria University, shocked the students by telling them not to be ashamed of an admiration for Byron. He set "Cain" before them as the most splendid statement of the case for liberty and freedom. For three generations the professors had told the students that Byron was not a poet, but a mere word juggler and the brazen trumpet of democracy.

Outside England, as Mr. Bebbington says, Byron is ranked next to Shakespeare in our literature. I do not think this is entirely due to his un-English attitude to life, so much as to his universal appeal. He is simple as well as subtle and he can be "*understanded of the people*". Above all he does not preach. There is not any doubt about his easy accessibility and there is no subjective obscurity in him. I knew a man who in twenty laborious years taught himself to read and write. He wished to enjoy poetry, and he was told to read Shakespeare, Milton, Byron and Shelley. At the end of five more years of struggle he said he enjoyed reading Shakespeare and Byron, but he found Milton and Shelley very difficult.

There was once a professor of literature who said to his pupil, "If you want to write English you should do as Dr. Angus told you, 'Read *Robinson Crusoe*, and if that is not philosophical enough read *Gulliver's Travels*'." "But surely", said the pupil, "these are children's books." "Are they?" rejoined the professor, "then read *Don Juan*, that is a man's book written by a man for men." "What is it about?" asked the pupil. "It's about every damned thing", said the professor, "and it will knock the bottom out of your conceit." That is the great thing about *Don Juan*. It knocks the conceit out of the world of grand pretence, and Byron was right. Almost all human pretensions have hypocricy lurking beneath the surface.

But *Don Juan* is not all satiric doggerel. It contains the most beautiful and the most exquisitely told love story in the world. Those who say that the egoist Byron is always present in his poems overlook some of his work. Has any other poet ever written any narrative in so detached a manner as the wonderful passage beginning: "There were two Fathers in that ghastly crew"? The very inequalities in the poem, which would be blemishes in any other work, are here strokes of genius.

Certain remarks of Mary V. Kernick in the current issue of the POETRY REVIEW cannot be passed over. She says Byron was a coward and lazy and that the word "Lord" spelt his doom. What doom, may we ask? How is Byron doomed? It is true that Shelley said the "canker of aristocracy spoiled Byron". Nevertheless he was fond of Byron and had an unbounded admiration for his genius. Byron admired Shelley also and their estrangement was due to the work of one woman. Shelley never blamed Byron for this. We cannot allow the word coward to be applied to Byron. Let Mary V. Kernick consider the calm way Byron met the approach of death at Missolonghi. Let her read poor Fletcher's account of it. Let her consider the conditions of the times when Byron made his five speeches in the House of Lords. It was only a brave man who could have made that speech in defence of the Nottingham frame breakers. Byron stood alone against the whole of society in defence of the dregs of the people. Did the word "Lord" doom him for this? This lady says Byron was lazy, but how could anyone be lazy with such an immense output. Byron died at an early age, and though he said he wrote rapidly, he could never have produced so much work if he had led a lazy or a dissipated life. Byron was neither wicked nor dissipated. He was not a Regency rake-hell. The devotion of Fletcher was not given to a bad man. He

kept his friends like Moore, Hobhouse, Murray and Shelley. The world is sick of hearing about his mistresses, because it was not his fault that he was so alluring to them. As to Augusta, we ought to be thankful for her. To a lover of poetry, what does it matter what Byron's relations were with her. It is sufficient for us that we have the Epistles, the Stanzas and "The Castled Crag of Drachenfels". These lovely things heed no moral guarantee. They are better without it. Byron was neither English nor un-English, he was of the whole world and for all time.

Slough, Bucks. Aug. 4, 1946. H. L. Senior.

POETRY AND INSTINCT

Mr. Hibbert has made a contradictory statement, or he disbelieves the assertion contained in the paragraph he quoted from my reply to Mr. Geoffrey Moore. He applauds my judgment of "great" poems but states that such valuation by instinct alone is not sufficient. I had stated that "I have *little or no knowledge* of the technical terms or structures of a poem": let me qualify this "or" and definitely assert that I have very little knowledge of such technicalities—I cannot remember having been *taught* such things. I was prompted by a quotation from Shelley to look into the works of the poet and from a good knowledge of his writings a judgment of poetry is, I think, assured. In a very short time a sense of rhythm is acquired—and if one already has a command of words, I think nobody can dispute his power to know by instinct what constitutes poetry. In fact, anybody who finds it necessary to acquire from books "the art of versification" cannot, to my mind, have much of a natural bent towards poetry. To my mind the trash that is produced by the "modern" school is an outcome of such concentration upon acquiring the art. I say it cannot be acquired, from the theory of text-books or practical application under routine. The judgment I have used to assess Mr. Read's poem is one which rejects most of his other efforts. I could not say the same of Shelley, Yeats, Browning, etc. Finally, it seems that various people do not agree with my assessment of this poem—very well, I acknowledge it—and it would be truly remarkable if it were not so. I'm tolerant—let tolerance prevail!

Romford. Thos. Astore.

CRITICISM CRITICIZED

I venture to call in question, not the sincerity, but the aptness, of the gist of the notices in the August-September issue of The Poetry Review of Howard Sergeant's book of verse *The Leavening Air* and the anthology entitled *For Those Who Are Alive*, of which he is editor. To take first matters first, I think no one (and certainly not the author himself) would dispute that there may be and are weaknesses, *individual weaknesses*, in various pages of *The Leavening Air*. It is one thing to agree on that point; quite another to concur with the verse reviewer when he writes:

> "It is a pity that Mr. Howard Sergeant does not appear to realise that poetry is not a thing which can be composed only with thought and words, ink and paper, but that those four elements are merely the builder's materials for the expression of the creative genius of the architect."

One might as well write—and with about the same proportion of accuracy—that the reviewer "does not appear to realise that only the essential achievement in a poet's work should be the kernel of any considered critique". Of course the reviewer realises this, just as Howard Sergeant realises that poetry "should sing", to quote the reviewer again. If sometimes the poet in question fails of

this effect that is a minor happening in view of the undoubted fact—the most interesting fact—that in a number of the poems in this first book the expression is finely simple, sensuous and passionate. Here is no masquerade of pretendedly obscure and profound inspiration like those of which patient eyes grew so thoroughly weary during the strange interval of the 1930's. Mr. Sergeant, I happen to be aware, has written not long, and I think it would be less than fair to deny that, not only has his highest flight "certain qualities of vigour and verbal distinction", but it reaches just that happy region which the reviewer, possibly through pressure of matter to be read in a limited space of time, extols as the heaven of all true poets, while leaving the reader in no doubt as to his opinion that Mr. Sergeant falls far short. He does not fall short; and he will prove this again I dare say, in more leisured time to come. If quotation be necessary, I would quote the quite astonishing lines from *The Word*?

> What is the Word—made flesh in flaming rose,
> Concealed within the wild anemone?
> The perfume of a petal? The graceful pose
> Of natural things in sheer felicity?
> It is the force that breathes a million buds
> To life, for one brief hour to dance . . .

I seem to hear the voice of Keats commending that, for it is imbued with the spirit of reverence which he supremely manifested.

To penetrate the essentials of the situation is not always easy in a review, since the time for "second thoughts" is in the nature of things restricted; but where emphatic censure is given, it is essential that the credit side should be shown if that side exists; and that it does exist in the case of Howard Sergeant is proved, I am glad to say, by such lyrics as *The Inarticulate, Intervention, Time's Nightingales* (very subtly good, this), *Thistledown Magic* and *Vigil,* in addition to the poem already quoted and which has already appeared in THE POETRY REVIEW.

To *For Those Who Are Alive* the poetry critic is no less severe. Well, let us admit that youth is not the season of technical perfection above all else in the Arts. But so long as ardour, eagerness, truth to what has been swallowed in over-plenteous draughts from the not over-sweet cup of the war years and a sense of the bright beauty of language well-used are present, that is significant; and I will make bold to asservate that these qualities are markedly present in this anthology, which one of the foremost critics of to-day described to me in a letter as "a good bunch". The reviewer is right to praise Jean Kenward, Wilfred H. Bartlett and Arnold Vincent Bowen, and right to dispraise, I have no doubt, in some instances; but I could multiply the names and not fall below the very creditable standard set by these three honest writers. Wrenne Jarman, Patricia Ledward (what is wrong with her realistic poem?—it succeeds, does it not?), Alec Smith, James Kirkup, and Emmanuel Litvinoff all do good work in this volume; and there are others who, from considerations of space, I forbear to enumerate.

In 1935 I had the task of reviewing an anthology of young poets, an anthology sponsored, I regret to say, in exceeding high places, and when I think of the attitude of youth *then,* I am inclined to thank heaven for the considerable mercies vouchsafed by a determination on the part of the bulk of these writers in *For Those Who Are Alive,* that, at the risk of strain to the throat, they will sing out loud and clear about the things which mattered most when Greece was the cradle of the Arts, and which matter most to-day, and will always.

Norwich. ARTHUR W. BALL.

Naturally, I was extremely interested in the review of my two recent books in the August/September issue of POETRY REVIEW. Whilst I am by no means insensitive to criticism, I was not unduly perturbed by the adverse comments of the reviewer—for other and equally authoritative critics have been more favourably disposed and have praised where he condemns—and it is certainly not my intention to defend myself here. I am more concerned with the suggestion that I prefer the work of one particular school (i.e., modernist). Whatever justification the reviewer may have had, the implication is a serious one, and as it is of some importance to the readers of POETRY REVIEW, whether poets or not, I hope that you will do me the justice of publishing this letter.

In my various magazines and anthologies I have persistently maintained an "open platform" for all poets, irrespective of the form and technique adopted, with the only standard that of quality. Further, I have made it perfectly clear that I consider the "warfare" between moderns and traditionalists with their wholesale generalisations to be absurd—

". . . . Although most of the fashions and theories adopted by the various poetry schools exert only a temporary influence, the modern *v.* traditional controversy rages as fiercely as ever and continues to divide the poetry-reading public. Intelligent controversy, in bringing the true values into focus, undoubtedly serves a highly important function; unfortunately, there is so much prejudice, intolerance and misunderstanding displayed by the participants on either side that the real points at issue are often obscured, and, as a result, the poetry-lover is left in greater confusion. Believing that there is an urgent need in these days for true critical standards which transcend all movements and doctrines, I am not, and have never been, concerned with the modern, traditional, or other labels, as such in making my selections. My only concern is with poetry."—*Outposts*, 1945.

I am well aware of the dangers in this policy, and that I am open to attack from both sides, but I remain convinced that it will be approved by all fair-minded lovers of poetry, whatever their personal likes and dislikes.

If my anthology is not typical of the recent trends in the work of the younger poets, as the reviewer asserts, it is at least representative of the work submitted to me as editor. I would suggest that the remedy lies in the hands of those contributors to POETRY REVIEW who still write "in the great tradition of our language" and are not afraid to let their work stand for comparison beside the best modern work. That I have published traditionalists like Olive Dehn, Jean Kenward, A. V. Bowen and many others, should be sufficient evidence of my good faith in this respect. I have two anthologies of contemporary poetry in preparation and wish to take this opportunity of inviting contributions from all the younger poets.

59 Orchard Av., Squires Gate, Blackpool. HOWARD SERGEANT.

Having both studied at length and reviewed the work of Mr. Howard Sergeant, I feel that some word should be said to correct the peculiar criticisms advanced by your Reviewer in the August/September issue. Speaking of Mr. Sergeant's own poems he says ". . . indeed there is a loyalty to heresy only too pronounced in the rhythmless prosiness of all too many of the poems which are here given". Now whilst Mr. Sergeant's poetry may be criticised, legitimately, on some grounds, this is certainly not one of them, since *The Leavening Air* contains no single poem which is not constructed on the basis of disciplined and evident rhythm. Careful analysis proves this, and I challenge your Reviewer to indicate

a poem in this collection which supports his assertion. Can it be that he is able to recognize only those rhythms which arise from the employment of schoolboy metrical construction? In quoting:

"Wiser no doubt to think of war in terms
of shaded maps, observing with what ease
the black and strictly impersonal line ploughs
deeply, reaping a harvest of towns—the names,"

as an example of to-day's heresy intended as to-morrow's faith, it is a pity that he does not add the last stanza:

"Know every soldier's wound is your wound too;
for every death, life takes the toll from you."

Such a misrepresentation could arise only from foolish disregard of context or deliberate distortion. Continuing his attack, in the criticism of *For Those Who Are Alive* (the anthology edited by Mr. Sergeant) he quotes the editor's prefatory note and states that the "rejection of the standards upheld by modern society" (by the poets assembled), to which Mr. Sergeant refers, is "no more than a rejection of poetical standards, which it is so necessary in this ugly mechanistic age, to retain". How can he be so naive as to present this as Mr. Sergeant's view when the latter speaks so clearly of "the standards of *society*" (not poetry) and emphasises the fact (in a passage which I quote later herein)?

In final contradiction of obvious and self-evident substance he proposes that the standards which "these poets in fact uphold" (and we are to presume that this includes Mr. Sergeant) are ". . . materialism, the scientific outlook, nihilism . . ." and "those bare facts of the physical world which the patient can distinguish with his five senses, ignoring the spiritual and emotional elements which alone give reality to any experience". Let me quote the words of Mr. Sergeant's prefatory note which again appear to have been ignored, and which indicate, wholly, the *direction* of the anthology reviewed: "the . . . younger poets . . . attempt to express those human and spiritual values which are essential to the fulfilment of life". And "the search for a more satisfying faith, combined with a sense of responsibility to future generations, at a time when the forces of science, bureaucracy and industrialism seem to be united against the human spirit, is a basic element in the work of all contributors to this volume".

If the purpose of review is to give an impartial and correct evaluation of work, criticising it for what it is, and not for what it is *not*, then your Reviewer would be well advised to be a little less superficial and a little more accurate in the examination and presentation of his facts.

Dulwich Village, September 18. LIONEL MONTEITH.

I was staggered to read your review of the Collected Poems of E. J. Pratt, which I beg you to read again or to obtain another opinion. Otherwise I feel sure you will do not E. J. Pratt but yourself a great dis-service.

I do not know whether he is the *greatest* Canadian poet since I do not know all the Canadians, but that he is a great poet I am quite sure. His book came into my hands by chance and anyone who knows my own work might have said, since that is largely mystical, "You won't like Pratt!" On the contrary, recognising a master, I could hardly put his book down.

Pratt is a poet who must be read in bulk and fast for the true grandeur to emerge, but he is not without his astonishingly deep and penetrative lines.

Did you not read Brebeuf and come across

". . . not in these was the source

But in the sound of invisible trumpets blowing
About two slabs of wood, right angled, hammered
By Roman nails and hung on a Jewish hill",

and many others?

There is a mystery in the heart of the flower and in its perfection but is there no mystery too in the ragged rugged mountain, no sublimity?

Pratt has all that—more perhaps. Don't forget you are judged by your judgments. Why! you actually quote a splendid line! "The laggard rhythms of their fusilade."

London, E.C.2, September 20. BRYAN ANSTEY.

The Reviewer writes: Mr. Sergeant is fortunate in the number and vigour of his defenders but not always very fortunate in their quality. Taking Mr. Arthur Ball first, there would appear to be very little between us in our view of some of Mr. Sergeant's poetry but where we must disagree with him is in the approach which any sincere critic should make to his task. The fact that Mr. Sergeant can write poetry which we regard as excellent is as well-known to me as to him. I have personally secured publication of some of it in this Review. But in reviewing a book I conceive my duty to be to condemn what appear to me to be errors which I am entitled to assume, from their publication, the author is unaware of. If I know he can do better it becomes even more essential to take him on those grounds and to pitch into him; but if I have given the impression that Mr. Sergeant's last book contains nothing which I can accept, I should certainly wish to remove it. There was, however, enough which I most assuredly did not approve to warrant the strictures which I passed. The second letter, that of Mr. Monteith, is easier to answer since, written in heat and discourteously, it lacks even plausibility. This letter, as the interested may see by reference back, quotes the very passage upon which I based one of my criticisms, as an example of disciplined and evident rhythm. Read intelligently it is, of course, a mere prose statement and is an example of a heresy which I abominate more in one who is possibly falling from grace than in the hardened sinner. The rest of this letter is mere argument except where, with a complete want of comprehension of my words, he accuses me of naivety. Mr. Sergeant's views are his own and I did not present mine as his. I only objected to the absurd statement that his anthology contained contributors who had rejected the standard of modern society. I detest this adolescent habit of dramatic overstatement and ventured to suggest that the only standards these people had rejected were those of poetry. As for the arguments with which his letter closed they express opinions which I do not share and have often challenged. It would be tiresome in me to repeat myself.

With regard to the letter from the *casus belli* himself, this, as one would expect exhibits by far the most reasonable attitude to my adverse criticism. He, however, himself recognises that his policy of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds, so to speak, exposes him to assault from both sides. I do not appreciate this negative attitude which seems to arise from some lack of conviction, and Mr. Howard Sergeant must forgive me therefore if I was somewhat severe with him for those things which exhibited the worse half of his dual loyalty. I am concerned, if you like, with the task of plucking a brand from the burning and would beg Mr. Sergeant not to be deceived by those poetic exclamations or phrases which appear constantly in ordinary prose. These things are poetic but not poetry and the same is of course true of this versified prose to which he gives

his half-hearted allegiance. Poetry is not only a matter of the poetical. It is also a thing of special rhythms and forms. This is the truth which we continually put forward and we have carried on this warfare for more years than Mr. Howard Sergeant has lived. It is a warfare not of traditionalism versus innovation as such, but against perversions by coteries and schools whose driving force is pretention and a self-conscious ambition which we regard as fundamentally inimical to the general interest of poetry. I am glad to note that there is no quarrel between us, and would add this final word, that when he writes, as he can do, and well, in the traditional way, he has no greater admirer than myself.

My views of a recent volume of the collected poems of E. J. Pratt have certainly found no echo in Mr. Anstey's bosom. This may be unfortunate but there is really nothing I can do about it. My correspondent says in his letter that Mr. Pratt must be read in bulk and fast for the true grandeur to emerge and he is *not without* his astonishingly deep and penetrative lines. The italics are ours, but what a tribute to a master, as Mr. Anstey calls him. There is not much jam in dough-nuts but if you bolt enough of them and fast enough . . . Mr. Pratt's poems are prosaic in their lack of a true rhythm and just as any moderately good writer of prose will often give off a striking phrase or sentence so does he. The point is that the arbitrary dissection of Mr. Pratt's work into short lines does not make it poetry.

"WHAT IS POETRY?"

Having for long been dissatisfied with the various classical definitions of poetry' I find Mr. Raymund Bourne's article "What is Poetry?" very refreshing and would like to say a few words in support of his views.

A poem is a certain kind of verbal vehicle for conveying the writer's thoughts to the reader. Poetry starts where prose ends. Very little effort is required to turn poetry into prose, but the reverse process is a feat, adequately performed by few. Poetry, rhyme, verse and metre are all synonyms.

However "poetical" a composition, it is not poetry if it lacks metre and rhythm. In their anxiety to keep poetry at a high level, most of the renowned critics of the past seem to have disagreed with this view in theory but not in practice. The gist of Coleridge's "final definition" of a poem is "that species of composition which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth" (Bio., Lit., Chap. XIV): it seems to me that many such "species of composition" may not be poems.

Coleridge maintans that the old rime "Thirty days hath September, April, June and November", etc. is not a poem (although it has metre, rhythm and a useful purpose), but if so, as it is indisputably not prose, what is it? So far as I am aware, it must be one or the other. As it has a useful purpose, it is more meritorious than if its "immediate object" was "pleasure". It obeys all the laws of poetical composition, so it seems unjust to the unknown author to refuse to acknowledge his little work as a poem, after it has been appreciated by the vast majority of English-speaking people for centuries.

Burns summed the matter up neatly when he said "I tuned my wild artless notes as she (the muse of his native country) inspired". By her aid, his "wild bird's song" he systematized into poetry. And Shakespeare witnesses, "As the poet's —— imagination bodies forth the form of things unknown, the poet's pen turns them to shape", that is, to poetic shape, blank verse, in his case: prose even when charged with imagination is not "shaped" for that can be done only by metre, and the writer varies rhythm as he listeth.

If a piece of imaginative writing, innocent of metre and rhythm, can be called a poem, then all our greatest poets' life-work was wasted.

Mr. Bourne's admirable paper would not have been wanted if the recognized authorities were in agreement: the quest for a definition has been in active progress for well over a century and a settlement is therefore overdue, yet a basis for it has long been available, which would much simplify the matter: I allude to the following quotation from the *Encyclopaedia Brittanica.*

> "The business of poetry is to represent by means of verbal signs arranged with musical regularity, everything for which verbal signs have been invented."

That is the formula on which all views could meet. It does not define poetry itself (which it seems will always vary with individual judgment) but merely states its *business*, which is to provide "musical regularity", that is, rhythmic metre. It is applicable to epics and nursery rhymes and satisfactorily differentiates them both from prose, which, however musical and high-minded, *lacks* "*regularity*".

Hove. HOWARD PARSONS.

A PETRARCHAN SONNET COMPETITION IN MEMORY OF LORD ALFRED DOUGLAS

The Poetry Society has the pleasure and privilege of instituting an annual competition in the noble art of sonnet writing in memory of Lord Alfred Douglas, its foremost exponent and advocate.

One of the last acts this graceful and accomplished poet performed before his death on March 20th, 1945, was to adjudicate our Petrarchan Sonnet Competition of 1944. Whatever his merits or otherwise as a poet or verse-writer generally, his powers as a sonneteer stand pre-eminent. Indeed it would be difficult to find in the English language in any age that he has been exceeded.

It seems especially fitting that in this competition he who stood for form and the classic-necessity in the writing of a sonnet should direct us still in the framework to be used. And so accordingly the two forms on which he insisted so unsparingly in the 1944 Petrarchan Sonnet Competition are alone open for admission:

For the Octave 1, 2, 2, 1: 1, 2, 2, 1
For the Sextet 3, 4, 5: 3, 4, 5:
or 3, 4: 3, 4: 3, 4.

Attention is drawn to the further definition of this sonnet form in the announcement of the original sonnet competition on pages 47 and 78, and Lord Alfred's Report and Award on p. 287 of Volume XXXV (1944) and the admirable analysis of the personality and the literary work of Lord Alfred by Dr. Marie Carmichael Stopes on p. 87 Volume XXXVI (1945).

The prize of £10 may be divided at the discretion of the adjudicators: the winning poem or poems will be published with the award in the Sept.-Oct. issue of THE POETRY REVIEW in commemoration of Lord Alfred's birthday, October 22nd. Competitors must not submit more than two sonnets and must enclose a stamped addressed envelope (1d.): closing date June 30th. Each sonnet must have a title and definite subject and not be labelled merely "Sonnet".

The Premium Editor's Report

MY labours in connection with this edition of our serial contest disclose nothing new in the way of matters needing castigation or remedy, perhaps because the faults previously noted comprise the whole sum of possible imperfections to which the poet is liable. It can be said, however, that these imperfections do not vanish before my wrath, but persist with an uncharming indifference which will yet make a philosopher of me instead of a critic.

One of the things which strikes me most, with that extra sense of regret as of something unfortunate which might have been so easily avoided, is that sudden break in rhythm which causes one to stumble and bark one's prosodic shins without reason, warning or apology. As I have said so often, the remedy is to read aloud every line one writes, forcing the tongue to give to each word and syllable its natural conversational stress and value, and forcing nothing else whatever. For if you will only remember that the false quantity, like the rhyme word, is never necessary but can always be avoided with grace, then you will not rest content, as you so often do, with the stumbling strophe which, unlike the fly in the amber, spoils your poem.

Let us then be technically competent, though we may never be poets. We shall at least have learned the craft and be in a better situation to attempt the heights with success, for it is certain that we shall be less encumbered in our progress if at least we learn to "lisp in numbers".

Adjudication this time was more difficult than on any previous occasion. Nine poems emerged as highly commended, from which, following my usual custom, I tried to select the winner, after prolonged consideration and many re-readings. But this time the task was beyond my capacity, and I was never more impressed with the well known truth that art, any art, can exhibit excellencies as different and varied as nature itself. When one is asked to judge the relative beauty of a flower, a tree, a hill or a lake, how should one say dogmatically which should win so impossible a contest? So it was with this competition; and while I was able to eliminate, often for the merest shadow of a blemish, five of my nine runners-up, the four who were left survived reading after reading, leaving me, each one of them, sure of its pre-eminence until I had read another; so that in the end I was obliged to divide the prize equally, giving no one preference but recording a dead heat in which all four breasted the tape together.

This is of course a good thing, and so is the long list of "commended" names, since it is evidence of progress and improvement, which is the sole reason why this Premium competition exists.

Following the recent custom, we print below the four winning poems. These are given in alphabetical order and most emphatically not in order of merit, for, as I have said, they are co-winners. Mr. Wilfred H. Bartlett, of Calverleigh, Devon, by reason of his place in the alphabet, comes first, and his poem shows a greater depth than much of his work which I have seen recently, without losing any of that emotional sincerity which is always present in everything he writes, and which is of course the true stuff of poetry. The poem has also a perfection of prosody which rewards its reading aloud with that uplift of communicated emotion which lovers of poetry know to be essential, and the foundation of that very love.

Soul, Know Thyself!

TURN inward, soul! Venture the smooth descent
Down long, unlanterned avenues of night:
Trouble the pools of thought
Those hidden vales have caught,
And stir the mirrored light
Of stars which dream in that wide firmament.

Phantasmal universe of vague desires!
Where drowsy shapes, moving in shadow, mutter
Dark secrets buried deep;
And from their caves of sleep
Wonders no tongue may utter
Emerge to set alight their quenchless fires!

Here the grim grandeur of the unknown invites
The roving eye; and chasms gape
Where things men loathe
Lurk in thick undergrowth
To rend and rape
The beauty in which a fledgling soul delights.

Here tower starlit mountains, summitless,
Lost in the azure of eternal skies;
And snow-fed fountains sing
Of many a lovely thing
Stored for immortal eyes
When spirit wearies of time's wantonness.

Soul, know thyself! Discern the depth and height
Of your illimitable universe:
Then, fearful, turn away
Lest, in that consummate day,
Yours be the curse
Of one, lost in himself, denied the Light!

The next, by Dr. A. C. Nash, of Hollyburn, B.C., is a more musical composition, but his lyricism is quite genuine and is informed with a delicacy which is quite enchanting. Nor does his poem lack depth, even if that depth be more one of feeling than of thought. I congratulate Dr. Nash upon his success.

Lament for a Crushed Lily

HAVE you fit word for this lovely thing,
This lily crushed in the ugly mire?
Prone it sleeps, like a broken wing,
Its essence fled and its heart's desire.
O touch it not with undelicate hand,
For you never, never will understand
How it was frail as echoes are
That thin and fade from star to star;

Ephemeral as the elfin kiss
  Of a butterfly on a maiden's hair,
  As she sleeps and dreams in the summer air
Of fairy fields of lilied bliss
  All lit with the light of a glowing mist
  Roseate, pearl and amethyst—
Ah! What could you feel or know of this?
Cast down, abandoned thus to die,
O touch it not! Here let its fallen beauty lie!

It might have graced a maiden's gown
  Or lit a dancer's raven hair;
Or, from an altar gazing down,
  Hallowed a flock that knelt in prayer.
It might have shone, clear gold and white,
  At a bridal or nativity—
Passionless as the coldest light
  That ever dawned on an Arctic sea.

Nevermore will its scent pervade
Forest aisle or woodland glade;
  It cannot sweeten a summer shower,
Nor raise in a garden its stately head,
Nor a casement rose-entwined invade.
Nor can its white and chaste delight
  Thrill a virgin heart for a fleeting hour.
  Never a tear has the pitiful flower
Of dew at dawn in the wilderness.
You may weep for its outraged comeliness—
  But where is the tongue with eloquent power
To lament its vanished loveliness!

Come away! Let it dream alone,
  If dream it can, of halcyon days;
Of April breezes softly blown
  By fairy fans down lilied ways.
Come away! Light on the moss
  And ferny floor let your footstep be.
The grace of peace is in your loss,
  The beauty of serenity.

The third poem is by Miss Roberta Shuttleworth, of Guildford, and is in fact composed of three sonnets in a closely knit series. In them thought predominates, but the thought has been clothed in beauty, sharpened by emotion, and sustained by sincerity so well that each of her three sonnets has emerged equal with its fellows and nowhere is there any sagging or declension in what is a truly impressive performance. Here it is: "A Sonnet Sequence on a Diamond Ring."

I

On Receiving the Diamond

Dare I, in Love's name, wear this loveliness—

This purity the flesh but feebly feels,
This judgment it must tremblingly caress,
This Book of Light once sealed with seven seals?
What is this secret of the sacrificed—
This lyric love immortalised by Ruth,
This crystal octave of the name of Christ
The Apex and the Cornerstone of Truth?
Is it the dissonance and discipline
Of Bach, resolved in unity of Light?
Is it the voice of dying Katherine—
Spirit of Shakespeare in transcendent flight?
Here is true peace in earthly conflict born,
Celestial Blossom of the Crown of Thorn.

II

On Wearing the Diamond

Fearlessly now this loveliness I wear,
For Love itself has touched my flesh with fire,
And sacrifice is throned in beauty there
To bless the issue of life's long desire.
I am at one now with the heart of snow,
Speak with high summer's jasmine-scented breath,
The chastisement of pain aspire to know,
And see Love's smile upon the lips of death.
Mine is the white note of high chastity,
That fire-engendered, frost-encrusted word,
Her rainbow fragrance is a part of me—
The Hallelujah chorus seen and heard.
As Venus shines from a time-darkened sky,
So does this diamond on my finger lie.

III

In Later Life

June's rose is dead, and contemplation now
Lies on my forehead like a cooling hand:
God grant this adamant may teach me how
Life's winter mysteries to understand.
For this clear stone—casket of Beauty's tear—
Records the cry of man, beast, tree and flower,
Earth's loudest triumph and her palest fear,
Her fire and ice blent in eternal power.
Here Time's great waves, resolved in greater calm,
The earnest of Time's surging dreams fulfil,
And, like the Amen of a mighty Psalm,
Obey the law whose voice is "Peace, be still".
Eternal Love here in cold stone is seen—
The Light to be, that has for ever been.

And last, but not least, is a poem as different as possible from its three companions. Modern in form, unrhymed, it nevertheless captures by its own unaided

emotional power a rhythm which floats the reader unresisting upon its own tide. It is by Miss W. V. Wall, of Liverpool, 20.

SUNSET

Tread gently, my soul; walk softly, the West is gold,
The shapes of things are black and beautiful against it.
The shapes of things are very lovely against it.
Tree plumes, spires, the dagger hilts of chimneys,
And an old tramp, alone on the road, descending
Black loveliness with the glory of God behind him.
The house of stars takes shape and the moon steps fall.
I could mount the stairway of the moon and enter the house.
I could mount, but enchantment nets my heavy feet.
That old Goddess the earth has set her snares.
"Love, let me go a little while and peep
Through the bright circle doorway of the moon,
At the loveliness behind the starlit windows.
Love, let me go awhile and then return."
Bitter her laugh: "You would betray your word,
Returning no more to me, I hold you fast,
Till the days of my enchantment are fulfilled,
Then mount, or wander for ever the vacuum of night."
But the shapes of things are very beautiful against the night.

If it be a merit, and I think it is, that poems should read well aloud, then these four have that merit in full measure. So indeed have all those which were sent in by the competitors whose names follow in the Highly Commended and Commended lists. I am afraid, and yet pleased, that I have perhaps by this remark divulged something of my method in judgment and my requirements for favourable evaluation. Poetry should be spoken, not mutely in the mind but boldly and with some histrionic fervour by the voice, and this is a test which, since I apply it, I strongly recommend you to do also.

Highly Commended

E. A. Gilchrist, Hever
Thomas Morgan McGurk, Edinburgh
Juanita Peirse, London, S.W.3
Howard Sergeant, Blackpool
Muriel Spark, London, W.2

Commended

Rachel Bates, Ambleside
Raymond Bourne, Lynford
J. R. Clemens, Missouri, U.S.A.
C. E. J. Fryer, Maidstone
Phyllis Hastings, Hampton-in-Arden
F. M. G. Howe, Hove
J. H. Loudoun-Shand, Cranleigh
Richard Macnair, London, W.1
James Crawford Milne, Arbroath
Francis Munro, Brora
Eleanour Norton, Stoke Park, Bucks.
Frank W. Reed, Knebworth
Thomas Rhymer, Twickenham
Lucy Rochelle, Rotherham
F. J. Rowlands, B.A.O.R.
Mairi Stewart, Newtownards
Muriel Symmons, Salcombe
Neill Wells, Belfast
Thomas Demarden Williams, London, N.6

A sonnet by the New Verse Editor, inspired by a *Daily Mail* photograph of St. Paul's Cathedral taken at dawn on the morning after the fire raid upon London early in 1941, has been submitted by the *Daily Mail* to the authorities of the Cathedral. The Bishop of London's Appeal, a body formed to promote the restoration of the Cathedral, asked for permission to use this sonnet in furtherance of that great object, and, this being freely and instantly accorded, published it with the photograph in a small brochure which they sent to all the parishes in the diocese, prior to a function which was held on the 25th September, 1946, when the Bishop of London sat upon the steps of St. Paul's to receive their gifts. The photograph, which is of the most dramatic quality, depicts the dome and cross of St. Paul's rising into a clear sunlit atmosphere above clouds of smoke and flame which enwreath and almost hide all the foreground and lower parts of the great church. The sonnet may possibly complete the picture in our readers' minds:

Lift up your cross toward the blue of heaven,
The dawn is come, invincible, to prove
That no man's rage its purity shall leaven,
Nor mortal spite eclipse immortal love.
How should you burn who rose from other embers
Upon new wings which inspiration spread,
A phoenix from that fire which Time remembers
In these dark smoke-clouds veined and shot with red.
The Master Mason made you, not His minions,
Your stones the words to give His poem form,
Which in your leap to heav'n become the pinions
Bearing you now serene above the storm.
For from the soul of man you rose, a prayer—
And fire but richer gilds the cross you bear.

THE APPEAL OF POETIC PLAYS

Thank you very much for the premium cheque safely received; I consider the approval of The Poetry Society of even more value than the award.

I was much interested in the letter of J. M. MacLennan on poetic plays, and would like to support his views thereon. I too, was a competitor in the play competition, and I have enjoyed the poetry of "Malvolio" very much, even though I find the theme rather stretches my credulity. What I particularly agree with, however, is Mr. Maclennan's belief that poetry in plays does appeal to modern playgoers. One of my blank verse plays was done in this village this spring, together with two modern comedies, and we were rather afraid that the audience would not rise to it, but we had a breathless silence throughout, which even survived one of those small stage contretemps which usually delight village audiences, and the applause at the end was really enthusiastic. Bearing in mind that this is a country village of 3,000 people, it would seem there should be an even more appreciative audience for such plays in the towns.

Wrexham. E. J. WORTHINGTON.

[Our correspondent's experience supports The Poetry Society's proposals (which developed into the Arts League) to send a small company of readers and players, selected by Sir Johnstone Forbes Robertson) to the smaller towns and larger villages.—EDITOR.]

END OF VOLUME XXXVII